

All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 50

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen explores the teachings of Jesus through parables, emphasizing the importance of discernment, church purity, and the value of the kingdom of heaven.

Duration: 25:10

Scripture: Matthew 13:24

Topics: "Kingdom Of Heaven", "Discipleship"

Description

This sermon delves into the parables shared by Jesus in Matthew 13, emphasizing the importance of understanding the hidden truths of the kingdom of heaven. It highlights the need to discern between the genuine sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one, the significance of discipleship in following Christ wholeheartedly, and the value of Christ above all else. The parables illustrate the necessity of paying the price for true discipleship, recognizing the treasure of God's kingdom, and being prepared for the final separation of the righteous and the wicked.

Transcript

We continue our study today in all that Jesus taught, looking through the Gospels to try and understand what Christ taught by his life and by his words. Because this is what we are commanded to follow and obey and teach others. Matthew 13 and verse 24, Jesus presented a second parable to his disciples and he said, The kingdom of heaven can be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat and went away. And when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, the tares also became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? And he said to them, An enemy has done this.

And the slaves said to him, Do you want us then to go and gather them up? He said, No, lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest. And in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, First gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up, but gather the wheat into my barn.

Now we need to understand what this is a picture of because we see here that the tares are those that look like the wheat. And so there was a danger if the workers went and pulled out the tares, they could accidentally pull out some genuine wheat crop as well. And if to understand the explanation Jesus

explained, there are only two parables that Jesus explained.

The one was this parable of the sower and the seed which we considered last time. And the other is this one he explained in verse 36. So we'll jump to verse 36 and look at the explanation before we come back to the other parables.

Verse 36, he left the multitudes and went into the house. And there his disciples came to him and said, explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. And he answered and said, the one who sows the good seed is the son of man.

Exactly like in the previous case, Jesus is the one who sows the seed. And here he says the field is not the church. This is the most important thing to understand in this parable.

There are a lot of people who interpret this saying the field is the church. They don't read the explanation Jesus gave. And they say so in the church, there are wheat and there are tares.

Don't pull them out because you may accidentally pull out the wheat. That is not what he said. Whenever we read Scripture carelessly or try to imagine that we have a better interpretation than Christ himself, you can be pretty sure you're wrong.

The field is not the church, it is the world. And the good seed are the sons of the kingdom living in this world. There are very few number.

They are the good wheat. The people who belong to the kingdom of heaven, whose mind is heavenly, whose heart is set on heavenly things because their treasure is in heaven and not on this earth. Now a lot of people, their treasure is on this earth.

So their heart is on the earth. The sons of the kingdom are those, speaking about the kingdom of heaven, are those whose heart is set on things above. And the tares are the sons of the evil one.

The sons of the evil one means the children of the devil. There's the children of God and the children of the devil. Exactly like John says in his first John, and this is manifest the children of God and the children of the devil.

And the enemy who sowed them is the devil. And the harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels. And like the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be the end of the age.

The son of man will send forth his angels and they'll gather out of his kingdom all the stumbling blocks and all those who commit sin. And will cast them into the furnace of fire in that place where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

He was yours to let him hear. So what did Jesus teach here? Jesus taught here that he allows evil people to grow up side-by-side with his children in this world, not in the church. In the church, when a person is evil, we know very clearly what the Holy Spirit has said.

There was a case like that in the church in Corinth. And when Paul heard about it, he says, I've already taken a decision concerning what to do, though I'm 1 Corinthians 5 verse 3. There was a man there who was living in sexual sin without repentance. And he said, I've already judged him.

In the name of our Lord Jesus, 1 Corinthians 5 4, and with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. And so he says, put that evil man out of the church. He's telling him such a person must not be kept inside the church.

He must be put out completely. What was he boasting about all this? The last part of verse 13, remove that wicked man from among yourselves. I've handed him over to Satan.

Now you take action and remove him. So were they contradicting what Jesus said about removing the tares? Lest they make a mistake of the week? Not at all. Because the field is not the church.

The field is the world. And the meaning is that God doesn't send his servants to pull out all the wicked people and destroy them straight away and leave only God's children here on the earth. No, because there are some who are not really wholehearted yet, but are weak, but can look like tares.

It's sad that they're like that. But God says he gives them time and opportunity to develop into a wholehearted life. And so God does not pull out the tares.

He does not bring judgment on people now. He waits till the end of the age before he separates the wheat from the tares. But that must not be so in the church.

The church must be kept pure at all times. That is a place for putting out people who live in sin, who pollute the church, and where people have not done that, the church gets destroyed. So that's so much for that parable, so that we don't confuse the tares with unbelievers sitting inside the church or a person who claims to be a believer, but living in sin inside the church.

He has to be disciplined or put out completely. Otherwise, like he says in 1 Corinthians 5, a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. Or like the English proverb says, one bad apple can spoil all the other apples in the basket.

So you've got to remove that one and throw it out. Otherwise, it'll corrupt everything else. We go to the next parable, which is in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 31, and here's another parable which is misunderstood.

Again, scripture interprets scripture. We don't have to bring our own interpretation to many of these parables because if we compare them with other passages of scripture, we can find the answer. For example, it says here, the kingdom of heaven, 1 Corinthians, sorry, Matthew 13 and verse 31, is like a mustard seed, which is a very small seed.

He says it's smaller than all the other seeds, verse 32. And a man takes it and sows it in his field. But when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

Now a regular mustard tree is not a very big tree. So how is this that it has become much larger than all the other trees and the birds of the air can come and make nests in that? Now that's not true. If a mustard tree, the birds of the air can come and make nests in it.

And yet Jesus said, here is a mustard tree that's become so big that so many birds of the air come and make a nest in its big, big branches. So I believe that this refers to a mustard seed which has been made to grow artificially, not into its natural size, but to a much bigger size through artificial methods of fertilizing,

etc. And the end result is you have a huge tree in which the birds of the air come and make its nests.

Now this is not a picture of the development of the true church because Jesus never referred to the church as something that grows up to be a huge tree. Jesus always said the way to life is narrow and few there be that find it. So the church would be more like into a small plant or a very short tree, not a big huge one.

But here for something to be full grown and to be larger than all the others, it refers to the false church, to what Revelation calls Babylon, which is huge in size. And how did this so-called Christian church, which is supposed to be preaching the narrow way, which Jesus said very few would find, suddenly have so many thousands and twenty, thirty thousand people coming in as if it's the most popular thing in town. That's because they made the gate broader.

And when you make the gate broader, a lot of people come in and the tree becomes very huge. And what happens when this Babylonian church becomes so huge in size? The birds of the air. Now what are the birds of the air? We don't have to try and reason what they are because Jesus himself told us earlier on about the birds of the air in verse four coming in eating up the seed.

And he explained that the birds of the air are the agents of evil. The evil one, his demons come and take away the seed. So it's the same birds of the air over here, coming and settling, demons settling inside churches.

They've occupied certain areas, certain branches, they've settled down. And this has happened in many, many, many churches, where demons are very happy because the narrow way to life is not being preached. In order to please people, seeker-friendly churches preach that which will draw the crowds.

And so they compromise in music standards because they want to draw the young people. What is the result? A whole lot of young people come to the church, not because they are interested in holiness, because they're interested in good music. A church should not be known for good music.

It should not even just be known for good preaching. It must be known for leading people to holiness. And if a church is interested in leading people to holiness, it's not going to be a very large church because Jesus himself said the way to life is narrow and few there be that find it.

So how small is this narrow gate? Jesus said about a camel trying to go through a needle's eye. In Mark chapter 10. So the gate is so narrow, it's like a needle's eye.

That's the narrowest possible thing you can think of. That's the size of the gate that leads to eternal life. And when a camel tries to go through it, he's not going to go through.

So a preacher is going to widen the gate so that the camel can go through. And then you have thousands and 30,000 camels in the way who are not really God's children. But this gate is like a needle's eye and the camel can't go through it because it is so big.

That's the problem. And anyone who's very big in his own eyes, very important in his own eyes, and lots of people like that, they are not going to be able to get through in this narrow gate. There are a lot of Christians who are self-important and think the world of themselves.

We think they are Christians. They are not really. They are deceiving themselves when they think that they are born-again Christians.

A true disciple of Jesus can never, never, never be big in his own eyes. He will be small in his own eyes. So this gate, this needle's eye size, which appears so small to a camel, it appears too small to a dog or a cat or even a rat cannot go through this.

So many little creatures can't crawl through that. But, you know, there's a little thing called an amoeba, which is the smallest of all these creatures. You can only see it under a microscope.

An amoeba is so small that if an amoeba comes near this needle's eye, it appears to it like a huge door, a huge door. I mean, it's like a man walking through a 50-foot door and says, Wow, this is not narrow. This is comfortable for me to walk through.

That's what that amoeba says. The camel says, Boy, this is so small. Who can ever get through this? But the amoeba says, Oh, we can run through it, not only squeeze through it.

Hundreds of us can go through it. What is the difference? The amoeba is small, really small. So when we are small in our own eyes, it becomes very easy to go through into God's kingdom.

God gives grace to the humble, but he resists the proud. So that's the thing we see here. The tree has become so huge that the demons can settle in.

And there are many churches like this where there's conflict and strife, and all because discipleship is not preached, and all because they don't teach everything that Jesus taught. If you want to build a church that's going to please the Lord, where the Lord can say, I'm with you always till the end of the age, to a church, I'm going to be with this church always. It's a church that preaches discipleship and teaches everything that Jesus taught.

Then he spoke another parable in verse 33, saying the kingdom of heaven is like leaven. Now whenever we speak about the kingdom of heaven, he's talking about the kingdom of heaven in its outward expression here on the earth, not in its total purity finally in heaven. In that purity there will not be any tears, like he said in the previous parable.

There will not be any birds of the air, the demons making nests there. So remember, this is the kingdom of heaven in its outward expression on the earth, where there's bad ground, there are tears, there are demons making nests there. It's the outward expression of what we call the church.

And a lot of it is Babylonian. So Jesus was explaining here that type of Babylonian church as well. Here's another example of that.

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven. Again, leaven is throughout the New Testament a symbol of something that is bad. In the Old Testament they were told that on the Passover day, they must make sure there's no leaven anywhere in the house.

And I've seen pictures of, you know, Jewish people lighting a lamp and looking underneath the bed and here and there just in case some leavened bread was thrown around by the children somewhere. That's how careful they were to remove leaven from their houses on the Passover day and the feast of unleavened bread. Now, Christians need to be just as careful to remove leaven from their lives and from their homes and from the church.

But here it speaks of the kingdom of heaven like leaven which a woman took and hid. You know, whenever you have to hide something, you know there's something wrong. She hid it in three pecks of meal until the whole thing was leavened.

And this could refer to, you know, Jesus prophetically looking towards the future to different aspects of Christianity, three pecks of meal. We don't know what it means but broadly speaking in the world there are three major streams of Christianity. There's the Roman Catholic and the Protestant and the Pentecostal.

And leaven has spread into all three. Each group thinks it's only in the other one but it's in all three. And Jesus said it would be there.

And so therefore we have to be very careful. 1 Corinthians 5 explains this very clearly there. He says, don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Let us celebrate the feast not with all leaven, the leaven of malice or wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5, 8 is so clear. The leaven of wickedness and malice, hatred, strife, bitterness, all these things are introduced by the devil into Christendom, competition between preachers, competition between singers. And the end result is the whole thing is leavened.

But unleavened bread is total sincerity and truthfulness. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Verse 6, therefore clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump.

So that is the solution to make sure that sin is constantly judged. That's the way to preserve a church in purity to prevent the whole measure from being leavened. And in all these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, verse 34, and he did not speak to them without a parable.

So that what was spoken through the prophet Matthew 13, 35 might be fulfilled. I will open my mouth in parables and utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. Now we go to the next parable which is the one of hidden treasure in verse 44.

The other verses we looked at as the explanation of the tears. Verse 44, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure. Hidden in the field which a man found and hid from joy over it.

He goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. One of the things we see here is that you have to pay a price. Now there are a lot of things in the Christian life that are free.

Forgiveness of sins is free. The gift of the Holy Spirit is free. But here he speaks about something you've got to buy.

Something you have to sell everything in order to buy it. To be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus there are certain things we have to give up. That's the price we pay.

We have to give up sometimes even legitimate things. Paul once said, all things are legitimate. If I've given up sin in my life, there are a lot of things I can do, but I don't do all of them.

From all the lawful things I can do, I pick out the things that are profitable. And I do only what's profitable. A wholehearted Christian is like that.

1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, he speaks about that. Picking out only the profitable things from what is lawful, so that he can find full fulfillment in his Christian life. So the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in

a field.

It's hidden. It's not obvious. What you see on the surface is superficial.

There's treasure hidden in scripture. There's treasure hidden by God. Once you discover what a treasure there is in Christ and in God's kingdom, you'd be willing to give up everything you have to get it.

Why is it you find so many half-hearted Christians who are not willing to give up some sin, not willing to give up some habit like watching movies, not willing to give up some habit which may be legitimate, but which is not helpful for spiritual growth. Why do they always ask questions like, Can we do this? Can we do that? How far can I go to the edge of the cliff without falling over? It's all because people haven't seen this treasure that is hidden. If only they saw it.

It's like being glad to sell everything. I mean, just like a property developer. Supposing he discovers that in one bit of land there's some gold hidden underground which nobody knows about.

He'd be willing to pay any price to get that land because when he gets the land, he gets the gold hidden under the ground. And so here's a man who's discovered what somebody else didn't discover and he's willing to pay any price to get that. And if he has to sell all his property to get it, he says, Fine, I'll do it.

I want to buy it. Jesus spoke about buying from him. In Revelation chapter 3, there was a half-hearted, there was a backslidden church, really, which was dead and wretched and miserable.

The church in Laodicea. And the Lord told that church, this is a church, I advise you, verse 18, to buy from me gold and white garments. I sell gold refined by fire, etc.

So there's certain things to be bought if we are to possess God's kingdom as spoken here. The same thing is repeated a second time in Matthew 13, 45 and 46. Again, the same principle.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man seeking for very fine pearls and he found a pearl of great price. That is a picture of Christ himself. That he's found Jesus Christ as to be such a valuable thing that he's willing to sell all that he has in order to buy it.

In other words, nothing is more important to him than Christ. Like the psalmist says in Psalm 73, 25, Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there's nothing on earth I desire beside thee. Lord, if I have you, I'm willing to give up everything else on this earth for it.

And a lot of Christians haven't seen the value of Christ like that. And that's why they're always saying, Lord, how much do I have to give up? Do I have to give up this? Do I have to give up that? A lot of young people, because they think, Well, it's not really worth. The land is not worth so much.

The pearl is not worth so much. Because they put a low value on Christ. That's why they're not willing to give up so many things.

And that's why they miss the greatest treasure of all. And one day when we stand before the Lord, we will discover what a tremendous loss ours was because we did not see the value of Christ. That's why it's so important for us to see the value of Christ right now.

And then finally, the last parable he spoke was about the dragnet, the final day when the Lord will bring everything in and separate the good fish from the bad fish. And the good fish and those who are bad will

be cast into the lake of fire. And then Jesus asked them, Have you understood all these things? And they said, Yes.

And then he said in conclusion, Once you have understood, you must become a disciple. The scribe must become a disciple. Not just understand scripture, but practice it.

So these parables are meant for practice. And then from our understanding, we can bring out treasures both new and old. We will continue our study in our next episode.

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