

Lesson #14- Matthew Chapter 13 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):

1. Discuss the parable of the sower.
 - a. The disciples wanted to know why Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables. What was His answer?
 - b. How did Jesus explain the parable's meaning to the disciples and how does the very story relate to His reason for speaking in parables?
 - c. What personal encouragements do you receive by the understanding of this parable?

Help for Teachers:

- a. The inescapable answer of Jesus is that *"it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given"* (V11). Unless God chooses to reveal Himself to an unregenerate heart, and place in that person a new heart (born again), they will not come to faith, *"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."* (V14-15)
- b. Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of God (Mark 4:14, Luke 8:11). The sower (us, commanded to take the gospel to the whole world) "went forth to sow" (notice he is sowing purposely) and broadcasts the seed everywhere as he goes along. Some seed fell by the wayside and was immediately eaten by birds. These are they that hear the gospel message and don't understand; Satan quickly comes and takes the message out of their heart. Other seed falls on ground that is stony. The hearer quickly hears the Word with joy but lacks root and is soon offended. Other seeds fall on ground where thorns are abundant and is soon choked out. Jesus explains that these are people that allow the cares of this world and pursuit of riches to deceive them into not heeding the message. Finally, some seed falls on fertile ground and brings forth abundant fruit, representing those that hear the Word and understand, producing much fruit for the Lord. In this parable we have the same sower, sowing the same seed. Three of the four places where the sower spreads the seed produces nothing. One place produces much fruit. What is the only difference? The ground. In Luke 8 the good ground are they *"which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."* The seed fell on ground (hearts) that God had prepared to be fertile. The explanation of the sower makes sense of Jesus' response about speaking in parables (in verse 34 Matthew declares that "and without a

parable spake he not unto them:"). A totally depraved human would never choose God. God must change a person's heart before they can respond to the gospel call with faith. God has elected those that are His children and "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

- c. We can know that our names are written in the "*book of life from the foundation of the world*". If we are elect and foreknown and predestined, then we are secure in knowing that we are safe in Jesus. Nothing about our salvation was ever contingent on us getting something right, but all about the righteousness of Jesus and the sovereign grace of God. Even the faith we have is "that not of yourself: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." If our destiny was and is forever in the hands of God, it is impossible for God to fail in securing our relationship with Himself; we are safe. We can share the gospel with confidence that some of the seed will land on fertile ground and bare fruit. Paul stayed preaching in Corinth an unusually long period of time because God told him to be unafraid, that no one would hurt him, "for I have much people in this city".

2. Next Jesus tells three more parables.

- a. What kingdom lesson is He teaching through the parable of the wheat and tares?
- b. Discuss the parable of the mustard seed.
- c. What is the parable of the leaven about?

Help for Teachers:

a. Jesus has sown good seed in this world, children of the kingdom. Satan also has children that are mingled in this world with the children of God, represented by the tares. God is withholding His wrath so that His children are not destroyed with the wicked until the end of the world. Then He will send His angels to separate out of the kingdom the wicked and destroy them with fire. With only those made righteous by Jesus left, they will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father".

b. Jesus used simple illustrations that do not lose their meaning with time and cultural shifts in His parables. Such is the parable of the mustard seed. Like a small seed planted in a vast garden is unnoticed, the coming of Jesus as a baby in a manger (the advent of the king) didn't rock the world. He grew up in obscurity and worked as a common craftsman. He began and ended His personal ministry in about three and a half years. His miracles and teachings attracted thousands of spectators, but at the end of His ministry, it was down to about 120 identifiable followers. In rapid fashion, as the sprouting and growth of a mustard

seed into one of the largest shrubs in the garden, so nothing has impacted the world as has Christianity. All people must decide what they will do about this King and His kingdom (“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32)

c. A couple of things come to mind with the parable of the leaven that the woman mixed into the large amount of meal, and all of it was affected. One thought is personal, that when Jesus brought His kingdom into my life, no part was left untouched. Even where there wasn’t surrender, there was (and is) His grace and patient call to come unto Him. (“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Col. 3:16). Another idea about this parable is more global; like the small amount of leaven changed the whole ball of dough, the gospel delivered by a comparatively small group of believers has penetrated the earth (“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” Rom. 10:18).

3. In verse 44 through 46, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to treasures.
 - a. What are the two comparisons?
 - b. What do you think is the meaning of these comparisons?

Help for Teachers:

- a. One illustration of the kingdom of heaven is that it’s like a treasure that was hidden in a field, and then discovered by a man. He re-hides the treasure until he can sell everything he has and purchase the field for its treasure. The second illustration is that it is like a merchant that specializes in pearls. He comes across this one pearl that is so wonderful and costly that he sells everything he owns just to purchase this pearl like no other he has ever seen.
- b. The worth of the kingdom of heaven and the joyful cost are two commonalities in these comparisons. The kingdom of heaven is not referring to a merely a geographic place; it cannot be confined as such (Ps 103:19). The kingdom encompasses everything and everywhere. John the Baptist said, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2) and Jesus came walking up. Jesus told the Pharisees that “if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matt 12:28). Jesus is the great treasure and the pearl of great price. This isn’t teaching that entrance into the kingdom of God can be bought with our wealth, Jesus paid it all and freely admits into His kingdom all that repent and turn to Him in faith. Jesus did, however, make it clear that once given that free gift, discipleship is required and will be costly (Luke 14:25-35).

4. Verses 47-50 are the comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet. Discuss the lessons you find in this parable.

Help for Teachers:

Similar to the parable of the sower, where the seed is broadcast indiscriminately, like the wheat and the tares which are allowed to grow together until the time of harvest so that the wheat doesn't become collateral damage, the kingdom of heaven is now compared to a net that is pulled through the sea and catches all sorts of fish (the gospel preached to those that will not believe and to those that will believe). The net is drawn to shore where the fishermen separate the bad from the good. Jesus says this is another picture of how God will send angels to cut off the wicked (unbelievers) from the just (believers justified by the blood of Jesus Christ) at the end of the world. The wicked will be "cast into a furnace of fire".

5. After teaching these parables, Jesus returned to Nazareth, "his own country". What was His reception there like and why?

Help for Teachers:

Interestingly Jesus goes back to Nazareth, where He was raised, and teaches in their synagogue. The people that hear him are amazed at the wisdom He has and, He does "mighty works". No matter the incredible evidence they witness and hear, they dismiss it all because they thought they knew Him. They question how that He is able to do and say such things, they can't deny the things they hear and see, yet they refuse to believe He is the Christ. Because He came from among them, they actually find Him offensive. Jesus makes the famous statement, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.", and "did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Do you think the same applies to us sometimes when we try to share the gospel or Bible knowledge with those that think they know us best?