

"Why Do You Speak to Them in Parables?" Outline

Matthew 13:10-17

- I. Jesus changes to parables.
 - A. (13:10) **"On that day..."** a very important day!
 - 1. After two years of doctrinal teaching, Jesus changes to only speaking in parables.
- II. The backstory.
 - A. The Pharisees threatened by Jesus (Chapter 12).
 - B. Conflict over the Sabbath.
 - 1. God's law for the Sabbath—Don't work!
 - 2. Pharisees laws for the Sabbath—endless!
 - 3. Jesus "breaks" the Sabbath laws infuriating the Pharisees.
 - C. Jesus's audience had changed.
- III. What are parables?
 - A. What they are not:
 - 1. Tame stories with sentimental messages.
 - 2. Moralistic stories like Aesop's fable.
 - 3. Social and political propaganda.
 - 4. Fairy tales.
 - 5. Trite stories for children.
 - B. What they are:
 - 1. Comparison stories—takes what is familiar to explain something unfamiliar.

The parables of Jesus are surprising stories and word pictures drawn from the familiar, that powerfully reveal to us the unfamiliar.

- 2. Jesus's parables are all judgement and grace: *"Every parable of Jesus confronts you, it judges you... then it shows grace and mercy* (T. Keller).
- 3. The parables are about the gospel, the kingdom of heaven and points to the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose and plan.

IV. “Why do you speak in parables?”—the disciples.

A. The disciple’s concerns about the clarity of Jesus’ message.

B. **“He who has ears, let him hear.”**—Jesus (13:9).

1. Two types of people:

a. Those who hear and those who don’t hear.

2. WE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH HEARING!

V. Four truths in parables:

A. The condition of the heart determines its receptivity to the truth.

1. The mysteries of the kingdom.

2. The Kingdom of Heaven

B. Those who receive the truth, act upon it, those who receive truth will get more truth.

1. A model from the world:

a. Perspective + Initiative = Success

b. Perspective – Initiative = Lost Opportunity

c. Initiative – Perspective = NOTHING

C. Those who reject the truth will lose what they possess.

D. Those who respond to the truth are blessed.

"Why Do You Speak to Them in Parables?" Pastoral Notes

Matthew 13:10-17

Please turn in your Bibles to Mathew 13, our passage for this morning...

I'm excited about this new series on the parables of Jesus... this morning is introduction.

I think there's a lot of misunderstanding over these parables... Of Jesus's three years of earthly ministry.... **After two years of basically preaching biblical doctrine... Jesus shifts His public discourses exclusively to telling parables.**

Mathew 13:1 ***On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables...***

I'm not going to be one of those preachers that when he finally goes to Israel comes back and keeps saying things like "I WAS THERE!" every time he opens the Bible...BUT...I WAS THERE!

But I have to tell you... that after actually getting to stand on the shore of the Sea of Galilee just two weeks ago... and even getting into a boat and go onto that sea...looking around and where Jesus told so many of His parables.... The word I immediately thought of then was "sublime".

"On that day"... that was a very important day in the ministry of Jesus... it was on that very day that Jesus dramatically shifts His ministry... the whole dynamic of His ministry takes an abrupt permanent change....its focus changes....His message changes...

For that day.... And for the entire last year of His life... when Jesus preaches...when He teaches... its always in parables.

Let me give you the back story for context...By the time we get to Matthew 13.... Jesus's ministry had taken off... as we see here there were now very large crowds following Him... wherever He went... the crowds sought Him out... so many He would have to get into a boat making that His pulpit as the shore would be packed with people clamoring to hear Him.

There was another people group that had become very, very interested in Jesus... the religious Jews... basically the Pharisees... the Jewish religious leaders who's very existence was increasingly being threatened by the message of Jesus.

If you back up to Matthew 12 you can get the picture... a tense situation had developed between Jesus and these Pharisees and escalates over the Jewish Sabbath....let's be on the same page regarding the Sabbath...

God's law for the Sabbath is this... have your notepads ready?... this may be complicated so listen carefully.... **God's law** for the Sabbath is... DON'T WORK.....PERIOD!...is that complicated?

The Sabbath is the day of rest for the Jew, mandated by God Himself in the Ten Commandments.

God modeled having a day of rest when He created the world.. remember in Genesis 1 in six days God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them.... then what did He do on the seventh day?... He rested from His work.... Not because He was tired... His resting meant that he wanted to now stand back as it were in leisure and savor the beauty and completeness of his creative work..... But also...as a model for us who NEED rest.

Take a day off... rest!... the problem was... after that Law had been given to the people of Israel... they began to abuse that day... ignore it...they didn't rest...they did whatever they wanted to do....it was all about them... little thought of their provider God.

Eventually the Pharisees were convicted regarding the abuses of the Sabbath... what did they do?... they created endless rules of what people could and couldn't do on the Lord's Sabbath... ridiculous new laws... they couldn't just leave it at "*Don't work, rest*"...

They had to define every action one couldn't do... the list became ridiculous...Many of these can't do's still exist in Israel today... Two Saturday's ago...In Jerusalem I went down to the hotel dining room for breakfast and was amazed at the tables full of beautiful food... and I asked "*how did all this happen?... It's the Sabbath?*"

My guide said *they prepared it all yesterday... and our servers today are Muslim*...well...in chapter 12...It's the Sabbath and Jesus and His disciples were walking across a grainfield... got hungry and **stopped to pick heads of grain to eat.**

The Pharisees saw that and said... *What are you doing?...you can't walk across a grain field on the Sabbath!... and stop and pick some food?!?!@*

So many laws and regulations were added by the Pharisees that the Sabbath became the most dreaded day of the week!.... That wasn't God's Law... that was man's added law...the Sabbath was intended to be the most delightful day of the week!

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 58 **If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own desire on My holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and honor it, by not doing your own ways...by not finding your own desire and speaking your own word. THEN YOU WILL TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD...**

And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth....take a day off!...rest in the Lord!...but the Pharisees added

You could not spit on the Sabbath because it would disturb the dirt and you would be guilty of plowing.

You could not swat a fly on the Sabbath because you would be guilty of hunting.

A woman could not look at her reflection because she might see a gray hair and pluck it out, which would be doing work.

How did Jesus respond?... He throws the truth at them... *Don't tell me what I can and can't do on the Sabbath... I'm the Lord of the Sabbath....* That made things a bit tense!

What does Jesus do next?.... He goes into the synagogue and heals a man with a withered hand... still on the Sabbath... breaking another man-made added law of the Sabbath.... The Pharisees are very ticked... they want to figure out how to “**destroy Him**”!...they wanted to kill Jesus.

Jesus doesn't stop... He piles it on... 12:22... **A demon-possessed man who was blind and mute**...Jesus sees the man and heals him... on the Sabbath....the crowd is stirred up... **Who is this man?... is He the Messiah?... the Son of David?**

This really gets the Pharisees wound up...(24) **This man does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons....** *This Jesus is operating in the power of Satan himself!*... so Jesus who spoke profound but straight forward words to the masses... profound doctrine in the beginning of His ministry... think *The Sermon on the Mount*...two years later...

Having the religious leaders of His day accuse Him from operating under the power of Satan... now there's the embryonic plot to kill Him...which they do one year later...so it is time for a change in ministry tactics and message.

Jesus's audience has changed... there are those who now want Him dead... there are those who want to hang around Him for the benefits...There were a few who were caught up in all the excitement... Jesus the celebrity.... *there were a few sincere seekers who desired to truly know who Jesus was*....those who's hearts were truly seeking, desiring, knowing they need the Savior.

So... from now on Jesus speaks in parables... Mark 4:33 says **and with many such parables He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it; and He was not speaking to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.**

What are parables?

In the most simplistic terms... parables are stories... what kind of stories?... well... first lets see what they are not:

1. They are not tame stories with sentimental messages.... *Awe...look at the kind old lady who had such a big heart she gave her last two coins in the offering plate... what a sweet wonderful woman!*

2. They are not moralistic stories like Aesop's fable... One lost commentator suggested that the parable of the Prodigal Son was about "good parenting"... *there was a good father in the house... but there was no mom in the house!... so the kid went haywire and ran off! ...so... you need a good wife!*

You need to be careful how you parent or your child will run off to a foreign country and live with pigs.... Really?... what about the worthless self-righteous boy who stayed home... we'll look at that parable if you're now confused.

3. The parables of Jesus are not social and political propaganda... The parable of the Good Samaritan is constantly used to argue for social justice... *We should all be like the Good Samaritan... who walked down the road in a hostile foreign country...he comes across a man from a different race... who had been beaten and left for dead on the roadside...*

He went over and treated his wounds... took care of him... transported him to a comfortable hotel... paid for everything...so people... we are to go down roads of our enemies searching for bloody beaten up people from different races and take care of them...

One social commentator criticized the good Samaritan!... He said what he did was good but he only did it once... he should have given up everything in his life and do it every day!... but the real problem was the government not doing enough for the oppressed and that is why the guy was beaten and left on the highway in the first place....

SO THE PARABLE IS ALL ABOUT HELPING THE POOR AND THE OUTCAST GET ON THEIR FEET... NO!

4. They are not fairy tales.

5. They are not trite stories for children even though children often are the ones that really get them!

A parable is a comparison story... they are designed to take what is familiar to explain something unfamiliar.... A familiar reality to a deeper understanding of an important truth... *Para means to come alongside of something else.*

The parable takes us from something we know...places it alongside of something we don't know for the purpose of understanding that which we don't know.... One definition goes like this: ***The parables of Jesus are surprising stories and word pictures drawn from the familiar, that powerfully reveal to us the unfamiliar.***

Jesus takes us from what we DO SEE to what we DON'T SEE—until He shows us in the parable.... Another definition is *ingeniously simple word pictures with profound spiritual lessons.*

We have forty parables from Jesus... no other Bible author spoke in parables... Jesus's parables are all judgement... only Jesus has the right to judge.... The main audience for Jesus's parables were always the disciples... the twelve... some of the parables are addressed only to them...

Basically...the parables were for His close followers... for His believers... the church... for believing Christians.... they are a great gift to the believer... but that doesn't mean they aren't tough on the believer....

Every parable of Jesus confronts you...it judges you... then it shows grace and mercy (T. Keller)....when you rightly understand the parables of Jesus you will see that every one of the forty parables Jesus taught... include both judgment and grace.

Every parable is about the gospel of Jesus Christ... every parable is about the kingdom of heaven...or the kingdom of God.... every parable is pointing to the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose and plan...every parable begins in this world but tells us the truths of the amazing world to come....so back to where we began... Matthew 13. [repeat]

Mathew 13:1 ***On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables...***

Jesus then shares His first parable...we call it the *Parable of the Sower*... we will look at this parable next week... after Jesus tells this parable... the disciples approach Jesus because they are a bit concerned.....

V. 10 And the disciples came to Him and said to Him, “why do you speak in parables?”

In other words... *Jesus, why don't you just speak plainly...why are you speaking in “veiled language”?*... the disciples... confused at the parable as much as the crowd... are concerned that Jesus is not getting His message through to the people listening... they're concerned that the crowd will not understand His message!

A farmer has a big bag of seed... on His way to the field... he drops some seeds on the ground... the birds ate them...He's a sloppy farmer.... He drops some more seeds on the rocky soil on the way to the field... amazingly those seeds sprouted quickly... but the plants died from being scorched by the sun.

The sloppy careless farmer drops some more seeds among the thorns and thistles which choked out the plants... but he finally gets to the field that has been prepared for planting... an amazing crop comes up..... everyone have a good day.

Jesus...why would you use language that doesn't make sense?... It's obvious Jesus did not take homiletics in seminary!... the class that teaches preachers how to preach... how to deliver the word clearly to the congregation....Jesus apparently did not know how to communicate with people...

One of my greatest disappointments... with myself... is when I get done preaching a sermon and someone comes up to me and says *Dan, I have not clue what you were talking about today!*...if you are a preacher or a teacher of God's Word you have failed your audience if they have no clue what you were talking about.

There's four things I am very concerned with each time I get up here to speak:

1. Are people listening?
2. Do they understand what I'm saying?
3. Am I being as clear as I can?
4. Why are they sleeping?

I don't want to hear... *Whatever you said went over my head!*

So... the disciples are concerned that Jesus is not getting through to His people because He's talking in parables... **why do you speak to them in parables?**... Jesus gives them an answer... There is a clue in verse 9 before the disciples ask Him this question.... Jesus at the end of the parable says:

He who has ears, let him hear.

That implies that there are two kinds of people who were listening to Jesus... and two kinds of people that will listen to Jesus the rest of His ministry.... Those who have ears that understand what He is saying and those who don't have ears that understand.

No longer is Jesus speaking to those who don't have ears that hear...those are people who are not interested in truly hearing what He has to say.....so from this point in in His ministry He's only speaking to those who DO have ears that hear...this is important... this is vital really...

When we think of the gospel of Jesus... we know that Jesus came to the world as a Savior... to save us from sin... but Jesus did not simply bring forgiveness of sins when He came... He did not come and simply say *If you receive me, I'll forgive your sins* and that was it.

If that is all He did that would be wonderful... it is our sin that robs us of peace and true happiness... and contentment... it is our sins that fill us with guilt, anxiety and insecurity.. on and on.

But forgiveness of our sins is just the beginning... Jesus came to bring to us the Kingdom of God!... Luke 4:43 The crowds were wanting to keep Jesus with them... He had been healing and teaching... **But He said to them "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to other cities also, FOR I WAS SENT FOR THIS PURPOSE.**

Forgiveness of our sins are at the foundation... that's the start... But Jesus wants to bring us into the eternal kingdom of God... the kingdom of God is synonymous to the Kingdom of heaven....**now here's what we need to hear...** the parables tell us how we enter into the

kingdom of God...and what will prevent us from entering.... **WE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH HEARING!**....**He who has ears...let him hear...**

Faith comes from what?... hearing...hearing what?... the word of God... Romans 10:17... hearing... the ABILITY to hear the word of God is essential to enter the kingdom.

Jesus answers the disciples question “*why do you speak in parables*” with four truths...these are true of all the parables...so keep this list with you.

1. The condition of the heart determines its receptivity to the truth.
2. Those who receive the truth, act upon it, those who receive truth will get more truth.
3. Those who reject the truth will lose what they possess.
4. Those who respond to the truth are blessed.

1. The condition of the heart determines its receptivity to the truth.

Jesus begins his answer

Read verse 11

What are you saying Jesus?... He is saying that He is intentionally speaking in a way that certain people will NOT understand what He is saying... why would Jesus do that?...why wouldn't He speak clearly to ALL people?.... **Because Jesus spoke parables as a judgement to those who did not have ears that would hear.**

These are people who's hearts were hardened against the truth of the gospel...this was a judgement on hard-hearted unbelief!... **The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven** is not revealed to them as a judgement for their hardened hearts!...*these are people who willfully have their ears closed to the truth,*

The mysteries of the kingdom are simply God's revealed word that was previously hidden... the Gospel of Jesus Christ was hidden in the Old Testament...it was there but it was hidden...but now through Jesus Christ...it has been revealed....

These are people who CAN'T hear the truth... that is their judgment.... We know these people... these are the people we know who listen to some truth in the Bible... Jesus is God... and they say “*that's ridiculous!*”.... **Jesus died on the cross for your sins...He was buried...and raised from the dead now you have eternal life**..... *well... that's nonsense!*

They don't hear...they don't want to hear it... they can't hear...now... **The “kingdom of heaven”** is much more nuanced... Mark 1:15 in the beginning of Jesus's ministry He said “**repent the kingdom of heaven is at hand**”... Not that the kingdom of God was fully established but that Jesus would be the future fulfillment of that kingdom.

The kingdom of God is certainly looking forward to the final eternal kingdom of God where all believers will be partakers of... But in another sense... there is the universal kingdom of God... where all of creation... good and bad are a part of God's kingdom... His universal kingdom... God is sovereign over all things...all creation.

I think its in the universal sense that Jesus has in mind here... Jesus is looking out over the fields... there is the same seed... the same Sower... But the soils are different... but all exists together in the universal kingdom of God.....

Warren Wiersbe---“*The kingdom of heaven (this universal aspect of the kingdom) is a mixture of good and evil... true and false...It's not the church...the church is in the kingdom of heaven... but it is distinct from it...here, the kingdom of heaven is equivalent to our term “Christendom”... we have all these churches filled with people... but not all people are true Christians...*

It is made up of all those who profess allegiance to the king... either in truth or in pretense”... So, after the death, burial and ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven... groups of people are going to gather together...some of them will genuinely believe the gospel... truly believe who Jesus is...

While others won't... some will surround them with Christian things... attend church... Bible studies... and yet... won't be true believers in Christ... they will come into the church... sit in the chair next to you... carry Bibles... but they don't really know God... believe in Jesus... *church is a good thing to do.*

It is all determined by how they hear or don't hear...and did you notice... the ability to hear is a gift... **to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.** Remember 1 Corinthians 2:12?

Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God. [those of you who have ears to hear have received the Holy Spirit who reveals to you the mysteries of God]**13 We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural person** [those without ears to hear] **does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.**

John 14:26 **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you.** The Holy Spirit opens your ears.

So...

2. Those who receive the truth, act upon it, those who receive truth will get more truth.

Read verse 12a

The true seeker... true believer who wants to know the truth about God is going to receive these mysteries... they will begin to understand these mysteries... and as they continue to seek to understand... **more will be revealed to them!**

What more will they get?... More knowledge of God... more fellowship with God... more intimacy with God... more understanding about God... a greater transition from setting affection of this world to the affections to the Kingdom of God!

We all know that in the natural realm... in this world... there's all kinds of motivational sayings to motivate you.....

***Don't Count the Days, Make the Days Count. ...
Energy and persistence conquer all things.” – Benjamin Franklin
The early bird gets the worm***

I personally like

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” – Confucius

In the natural world... If you get up early... if you're proactive about your day... you make the best of your time... you're productive rather than lazy... you will get more out of your day....right?....

There is a reward for effort... there is a reward for expended energy to achieve something... there is a reward for those who work hard....

Jesus is saying here that in the spiritual world... the more you seek... the more you search... the more you embrace what God has already revealed to you... when you make an effort... when you fight lethargy... spiritual lethargy... *I'm not going to read my Bible today because I'm wanting to watch the Superbowl....*

The more you open yourself up to the truth... the gospel.... The mysteries of God.... the more you will get!...that's His promise to us!

Amazing principle here.... **YOU WANT MORE?... THERE'S MORE AVAILABLE... IT'S ENDLESS!**....more knowledge of Jesus... More knowledge of God... IT'S AVAILABLE!... More intimacy with Jesus... IT'S AVAILABLE!...you have a part in that acquisition.

It's never exhausted!...

Listen to one of the world's gurus... the self-help motivators... I think this came from Tony Robbins in the early 90's.... I wrote this down and found it a couple weeks ago....

Simple formula:

Perspective + Initiative = Success

Perspective – Initiative = Lost Opportunity

Initiative – Perspective = NOTHING

“ By **perspective** means the ability to see...the ability to see the truth... the ability to dream... to see the bigger picture...to understand... see clearly...to envision opportunities...the ability to see what is necessary to reach that opportunity....

To see a vision and see the way to achieve that vision... it is the person who can see a vision and see it in its various parts....If we can think spiritually... it is the ability to see God in the circumstance you are in... in other words... to see God in all of your life.

Isn't that what we want?... isn't that what is necessary?... to see all of life in relationship with God... that's part of what going to church is all about... we come here to learn more of how to see God in all of life.... to see His plan **HIS PERSPECTIVE AND MAKE HIS PERSPECTIVE OUR PERSPECTIVE**.... and learn how to come alongside His plan for our lives...

It is all about hearing and “seeing”...

“Initiative” is the ability to act on your perspective.... Initiative is the action on one's perspective... you have a vision... it's worthless unless you act on it.

So “perspective” the ability to see... in this case...spiritually... to see clearly the gospel of Jesus Christ... the ability to see oneself in our true state... sinners in need of a savior... to see that we really are not capable of being Lords of our own lives...

To be able to see our need for Jesus.... To see who Jesus is... to see what Jesus did for us on the cross... to be able to see that there is a better world we can be citizens of... able to see the kingdom of God...

SO we see.... Add to that having the initiative to act on that... what's that look like?.... Searching more and more who Jesus is... pouring over God's word to see what the Lord requires of me... to fill ourselves with His word... His truth...opened hears and eyes!

So Perspective + Initiative = what does Jesus say?... instead of worldly success.... Seeing the truth and then living out that truth **results in receiving more!...an abundance!** Verse 12!

3. Those who reject the truth will lose what they possess.

¹² For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

This is one who has been given the gospel... they have some of the truth.... But the truth has not penetrated into their hearts... they have closed ears to the truth... they may hang out in church but eventually they will disappear....

having perspective... seeing.... But taking no initiative...not only results in lost opportunity.... But here... Jesus says... what perspective you have will be taken away from you!... because that perspective doesn't mean anything to you! PEARLS BEFORE SWINES....

Seeing the truth but not doing the truth... seeing the gospel but not having the gospel flowing through your life... living the gospel... is a lost opportunity for you.

That last part of the equation is equally tragic... **Initiative without perspective = NOTHING**.... Doing religious things without seeing the truth... **is worthless!**

Jesus emphasizes and illustrates this with that classic passage in Isaiah...(14-15) Isaiah the great prophet personally experienced the grace of God as his own sins were atoned for...a very dramatic scene in Isaiah 6.

When Isaiah is set free from his sins by God... then he is ready to be used by God... only then did he hear God's divine call for his life... to be His prophet... God asks Isaiah **whom shall I send, and who will go for us?**,.... How does Isaiah answer?... **Here I am send me!**...
perspective = initiative.

What followed is shocking... God charges Isaiah with warning his people **that they will hear but not understand!...they would see but not perceive...their ears would be heavy, their eyes blind and their hearts dull...**

But there's a promise from God in his mission... there is hope... Some... after his preaching would truly have opened ears and eyes.... And they would return to God...repenting and experience amazing spiritual healing.

4. Those who respond to the truth are blessed.

Read verses 16-17

The person who has God's vision... who shares God's vision... who lives out the truth of the gospel...**not as a works to be approved by God but as evidence the truth is flowing through your heart...** God will provide more and more in "abundance"...

Jesus uses Isaiah to teach His disciples just why He now speaks in parables... it comes down to whether or not we truly hear and truly see...if we do...hearing and seeing will be demonstrated

in obeying Christ...repenting of our sins and returning to God—the very picture of the saving power of the gospel!

Do you see the good news in this passage?...do you see why Jesus spoke in parables?... [by the way....did you notice the disciples did not understand the parables until Jesus explained it to them?... when we read God's word... we need God to reveal to us what He has said]

Do you see the bad news?... do you see the judgement?... the grace?