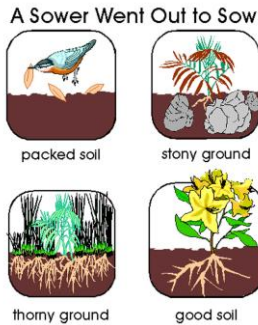


Matthew 13:47-52 “Heaven and Hell: Both Exist”

3.12.17

This morning we arrive to the final parable of Jesus’ “7 Kingdom Parables.” We’ve looked at each of these 7 parables in detail over the last several weeks and we’ve learned a lot.

After one year of teaching and preaching and performing literally thousands of miracles throughout Galilee, Jesus finally begins to reveal to the people how His kingdom would come about. We’ve seen through these parables (which are earthly stories with heavenly meanings) how Jesus has chosen to reveal to His followers what they’ve been seeing over the past year. You’ll remember the four different reactions the people have seen. This came from the first Kingdom Parable...we call the “Parable of the Sower.”



Jesus described how many will reject Him...some because they are hard-hearted, like packed soil... some because they have shallow roots, can’t handle persecution... some because of the cares of this world get choked out...**BUT SOME...**were choosing to accept Jesus as the Messiah, believe His message and trust their lives to Him. They are considered the good soil, because they bear fruit.

Jesus shared a second parable. He described in the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds and how His kingdom wasn’t going to come while He was on the earth this time, because He was going to give everyone, (including Gentiles), a shot at the kingdom. Remember, it’s not until the end of the age...or what Jesus calls the harvest that you’ll be able to tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds. Remember this picture...



Indeed the good will grow with the bad and be separated by His angels at the judgment **AND** this last parable that we’ll look at today will point back to this parable. We’ll see that in a bit.

Remember how Jesus encouraged this little rag-tag bunch of believers by in essence saying, “Don’t worry...you are going to start out small...like a grain of a mustard seed, but you will grow large.” That was the parable of the...



...mustard tree and the parable of how the leaven or yeast can be small, but still influence a massive mound of dough.

And then last week we saw the two very encouraging parables of how Jesus came looking for us...giving up all that He had in heaven and He came and died on the cross...paying the price.



He bought us at a price and then He came looking for us. He sees us as a treasure in a field and as a pearl of great value...



And He gave all He had to save us...but, we have to be willing to go with Him. We must be willing to be like the seed in the good soil...we receive Jesus by faith in our lives and bear fruit indicating we are His.

But, what about the bad seed? What about the seed that produced no fruit? What about those who refuse and reject Jesus? Well, that's where Jesus ends up with this last parable of the Kingdom Parables. Parable #7. Let's look at it together.

Matthew 13:47-52

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. **48** When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. **49** So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous **50** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **51** "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." **52** And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

It's almost been like a roller coaster, riding along as Jesus has taught these 7 parables. We've seen negative and positive reactions with the four soils...we've seen the good and the bad with the wheat and weeds...and we've been encouraged from that which is small can come something as large as the Christian Church in the world today. And the joy that comes from knowing that Jesus paid it all so that we could be the treasure and the pearls in His kingdom. And yet, He ends His parables with a frightening warning of all things. He ends with "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in a place called the fiery furnace and He asks: "Have you understood these things?"

This last parable is the climax and the climax is judgment. This last parable is about what happens to those who reject Him...they are the bad seed. This parable is about hell.

Is this fact startling to you? Jesus, the one who loved us so much that He was willing to die for us and give all that He had for us... Is it surprising He would end His kingdom parables this way? It seems almost strange to hear these words coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because we don't associate the Lord Jesus Christ with Hell! We associate Him with heaven. And that's true...but, we must understand the Jesus of the Bible said more about hell than all the other biblical preachers combined.

And I'm convinced of this: If Jesus hadn't been the one to teach us about hell, we would not have believed it really existed. If only Paul or Peter or James or Luke taught about Hell, we would have likely dismissed it and said, "Well, Jesus didn't teach about it, so it must not exist." After all, Hell is terrible. It's beyond comprehension. It's almost inconceivable... It's so terrifying and revolutive! It's hard to conceive eternity in a place like that.

And so, it had to be our Lord who said this about Hell, or we would have never believed or been able to accept it. As hard as it is to say, "As much as Jesus was a preacher of love, He was also a preacher of Hell." Over and over again in the Gospels we read about Him warning people about Hell. That's what the Bible teaches. Jesus didn't want us to go to Hell. He came to seek and save that which is lost. The Bible says in...

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

As I was studying this week, I came across this anonymous quote about Hell. I want you to see it with me.

***"There is no way to describe hell, nothing on earth can compare with it. No living person has any real idea of it. No madman in wildest flights of insanity ever beheld its horror. No man in delirium ever pictured a place so utterly terrible as this. No nightmare racing across a fevered mind ever produced a terror to match the mildest hell. No murder scene with splashed blood ever suggested a revulsion that could touch the borderlands of hell. Let the most gifted writer exhaust his skill in describing this roaring cavern of unending flame and he would not even brush in fancy the nearest edge of hell."* Anonymous**

This morning we will now look at the words of the most loving, kind man who ever lived...the God/man, as He teaches about Hell.

Matthew 13:47

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind."

Once again, Jesus uses something that everyone in His audience would understand as he picks a common, everyday thing to teach this last Kingdom Parable: Fishing. After all, He's teaching in Capernaum, which is a fishing town. See the map.



Capernaum is at about 11 o'clock on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Fishing in our Lord's time was a common enterprise. Fishing was a way of life. We know that's true of Peter, James, John and Andrew. All were fishermen.

Now in Jesus' day, there were basically three ways to fish. And these **three ways** are still being used today in and around the Sea of Galilee. **The first way** was with a line and a hook. Remember when the Temple Tax had to be paid? Jesus told Peter in Matthew 17:27 to go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that you catch, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel...use it to pay the tax. Hook and line!

The second way was with a "casting net." Here's a picture of a casting net.



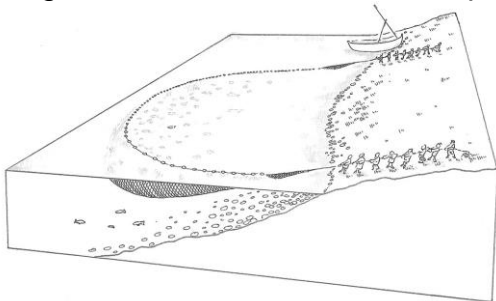
As you can see: a casting net is like a large circle and on the outer perimeter of that netted circle are weights all along the edges. There's also a string that runs through perimeter of the net and once it is cast, it begins to sink (because of the weights) and the fisherman quickly pulls the string to enclose the fish into the net. In essence, the fisherman would watch and wait until he saw a school of fish, and then he would spin that casting net out and it would open its full circle and capture the fish. And that is the net Jesus used as the example when He said to Peter and Andrew, James and John, "I will make you fisher's of men." He was speaking of throwing out a casting net. That's way #2.

The third way is the way Jesus describes here in this parable in Matthew 13. The net used is

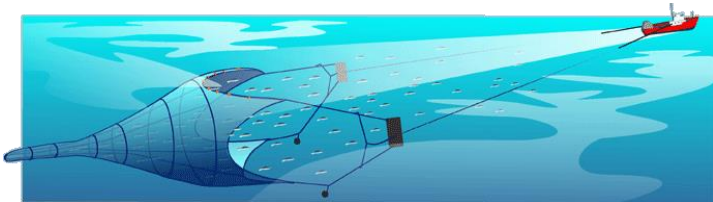
called a: *sagēnē*, and it has to do with what we would call a trawl net or dragnet. Take a look.



That's an artist's depiction of a section of a dragnet being repaired there in the foreground and in the background you'll see the fishermen pulling in that large dragnet. Take a look at this example of how this worked in the first century...



You'd have men on the shore and they'd hold one end of the net and then a boat would take the other end of the net and circle away from the shoreline and drag the net back in to shore quite a distance away. Some of these nets were mammoth. They had weights on the bottom and floats on the top. Here's a modern day picture of one of these dragnets, sometimes called a "trawl net."



Of course that's a motorized boat. Not so in Jesus day. They used sails and their backs with oars in their boats.

Here's a modern-day picture of what a dragnet can bring in...

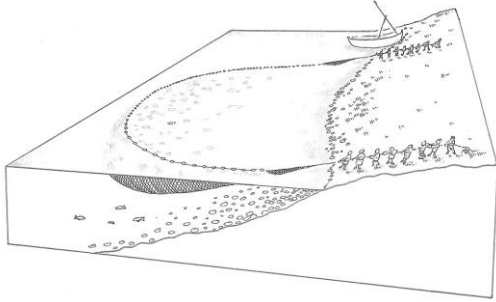


Look at all of those fish!! That's amazing, if you ask me!

Now, what I believe Jesus wanted His disciples to understand using this example of the *sagene* is how immense in size the net is and the fact that it pulls in everything in it's wake. It was like a vertical wall sweeping everything into it whether it be living or dead. Those types of nets would

sometimes drag the bottom of the sea and pull up all kinds of things like seaweed, dead wood, slime, silt, and even dead fish.

And so again, take a look at the picture...

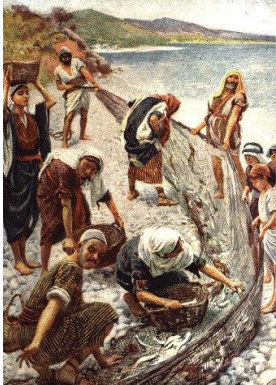


once that far end of the net was brought back to shore, they'd begin to pull it in... See those men... And that net would be unbelievably heavy and they'd pull with all their might.

Matthew 13:48

48 When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

Here's that might have looked...



See them sorting out the fish. Even the ladies would come...(sisters or wives) and they'd help collect the good fish. Here's another picture of this process that still happens today...



Just imagine all those fish in that net...just teeming...flapping...flopping around. And then begins the very slow, deliberate careful, patient, unhurried, accurate, knowledgeable, skillful process of sorting out the good from the bad. They sat down to do it and they would take the good and put them it into some vessels of water, so as to keep them alive to get them to the market as fresh as possible. If they were to be used immediately, they would just place them in a vessel with no water.

But, the bad...they were thrown away or simply left to die there on the shore. Finally the flipping and flopping would stop. Isn't that sad? It reminds me of the commercial...

**"WHEN I HAVE AN
ASTHMA ATTACK
I FEEL LIKE A FISH
WITH NO WATER."**

-JESSE, AGE 5



ATTACK ASTHMA. ACT NOW.
1-866-NO-ATTACKS
WWW.NOATTACKS.ORG

That commercial always caused me to cringe. I hated it for that little fish.

But, you see, the point is not about fish...IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE!

Matthew 13:49

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous.

You see, we have come full circle with these 7 parables and this is why I believe it's so important to preach and teach from books of the Bible in sequence and not jump around and preach topical messages, because we can easily lose the context of what's being said. Jesus is back where He started with the parables. Here's the bad being separated from the good. The 75% of the seed that was no and the weeds are back in view.

Remember, Jesus had said to let the good grow with the bad...but, one day, His angels would separate the bad from the good...the evil from the righteous.

Listen to me...we are living in the Age of Grace...but, one day, this era will end and God will no longer tolerate the evil growing with the good. The time WILL come when God WILL make a separation between those who know the King (His Son) and are part of His kingdom and those who do not.

Now, I want you to try to imagine with me and get this image in your mind about this net...this massive wall...moving through the sea. But, think of it as not only in the sea...but, think of that net moving through the sea of time. You see, that's what is happening now...time is like that big net and it's sweeping up people, like fish...almost imperceptibly and silently, drawing all of humankind to the shores of eternity for that inevitable separation.

That's the principle. Think of it from the perspective of the fish... That net draws in all the fish, slowly but surely. They're just swimming along...and oh...now we're going in this direction and they swim ahead and think they're free and then they swim back...but realize...uh oh...that's a bunch of my buddies coming at me and their eyes are wide open and they look frightened. Then they slowly come to the realization there's no escape... They try to swim through the net and there's no way out and then, the water...oh no...it's getting too shallow... they can't swim...and then they're dragged up on the seashore...gasping for air...they need the water and it's gone!

It's a frightening thing to consider fish: but what about men and women who live in this world

imagining themselves to be free, moving about, fulfilling their own desires, going here and there as they wish, with little knowledge that the net is coming closer and closer and closer. People seemingly float about in the liberty of the wide deep sea of life, not knowing the invisible line of judgment is moving closer and closer and closer. And each time they are touched by it, they move a little further away. And then they're touched again and they flitter away and finally, they're trapped...they can't even move and they're dragged to shore and left on the sand flailing and flipping, until they finally enter into a silent death. Men and women...without Jesus.

And that's how it is. Men and women and may not even perceive the kingdom, they may not even see God moving in the world, because of their blindness...but He's moving. And very often when they are touched by the gospel of Jesus Christ, or confronted with the threat of judgment, they dart into that freedom they think is still ahead of them. But sooner or later they run right back into the same net because there's no freedom now...only the trap of death that eventually leads to their inevitable judgment.

You see, the net is indiscriminating in the sense that it catches everything in its way. And that's true with time. It catches us all... and one day, time runs out. And for the bad...for the lost...the unsaved...those who rejected Jesus...it's over... See it again.

Matthew 13:49-50

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous **50** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Oh church family, oh how I wish I could eliminate the doctrine of Hell. But, I can't. There it is. We just read it. And this is the heart of this parable. Cast into the furnace of fire forever. Those are terrifying words from Jesus.

Do you remember what Jesus said back in Matthew 10:28?

Matthew 10:28

28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Jesus said we should fear hell! That's what He preached!

Hell is such a horrible place and Jesus described it as an ETERNAL place in Mark chapter 9. Remember when Jesus said that Hell is the place where the worm never dies. He said...

Mark 9:47-48

47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, **48** 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

Hell is awful...it's horrific and beyond description! It's a place of unrelieved torment where the worm never dies, the fire never goes out, the sweet relief of death never comes. Eternity... Endless. It's beyond comprehension. I don't want to scare anyone today (children), but this must be taught because Jesus taught it.

I think of people suffering on this earth with disease and the only reason or the only way in which

they can make it through that pain and suffering from disease is because they believe there will be an end to it. But, not in Hell. The suffering never ends! After 10,000 years, you've only been there equivalent to speck of dust in the universe. It's inconceivable misery forever!!

No wonder Jesus had to teach this doctrine. Because if He didn't we wouldn't have believed it if someone else had!

Jesus asked His listeners, "Do you understand what I've taught you?" See it...

Matthew 13:51

51 "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes."

That word in verse 51 "understood," means: "have you put it all together?" Like a puzzle. Do you have this put together in your minds? And they said to Him: "Yes." They got it! He said, "Good...now go do this..."

Matthew 13:52

52 And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Jesus was saying, you are to be like a scribe, a teacher, an interpreter of the law and you must teach this to others. In essence, Jesus said, "You now know the truth...you now understand the old and the new. That was an allusion to the Old Testament prophecies that had been fulfilled in Him, right before their eyes. He said, "You've been trained now...you're prepared...now go bring this treasure out of the house and share it with the world!" Fling it out to the world! Don't hold back! Go tell people about my kingdom... Warn them of the consequences of not being in my kingdom and accepting me.

Church, the wall of time...like a dragnet is moving toward the shores of eternity. The angels are waiting there to separate the good from the bad...those who have accepted Christ from those who have rejected Him.



Which one are you? Are you saved? Are you sure? Jesus came to save you and pick you up off the shore of life and take you to safety in heaven. Have you given your life to Him?

If you are here today and you DO know the Lord and you ARE saved...does it prick your heart to think about a fish dying on the shore...flipping and flopping around trying to get air? What about a human being? Did you know 151,600 people die each day on this earth? Their net has been

dragged to shore. Where will they go?

Do we care? Does it stir our hearts to think about this? The fact that people are dying and most likely many, many, many of those people who die today may perhaps end up in Hell...because no one has told them about Jesus ...that should stir our souls. And if it doesn't...then, let's admit that we simply don't care, and if that's the case...that's the epitome of selfishness.

May we, instead, be like Jesus and seek and save that which is lost before the dragnet of time comes to shore!
