

LIX. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
The Kingdom of God and the Word of God
“The Kingdom of God—So What? So What Next?”
Matthew 13:51-58
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August 30, 2015 – Morning Sermon

This is our 14th and last sermon on the Kingdom parables in Matthew 13. This is God’s Word and God’s Word is the truth. Matthew 13:51-52 says [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.”* The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I’m sure many of you have heard of the Greek philosopher Socrates and some of what he was known for, not the least of the Socratic method of teaching which refers to him using in teaching a predominant use of questions – thoughtful questions, questions that would draw the student out so that the student would know what they knew and needed to know. Of course as great as Socrates is he pales into insignificance in comparison to Christ, the Lord of glory. I’m amazed as I go through Scriptures to see how Christ used questions. Even when He was asked a question He felt no compulsion to answer the question immediately and would generally say “I’ll answer your question if you answer this question.” The power of questions is absolutely amazing.

I also like using questions when talking to people about Christ. If you think Socrates pales in comparison to Christ you ought to see how I pale in comparison but still in a stumbling way I like to use questions. I will use two questions in this concluding sermon on Matthew 13. We have used 13 studies to look at these parables that Jesus used to teach about the Kingdom of God to His disciples. Those seven Kingdom parables fit into the 32 parables that He used and part of His parabolic teaching was to affirm that He was the Messiah because the Bible said He would teach in parables.

These seven parables focused on what the Kingdom of God was like and these seven came in three sets of two with a single parable to sum it up at the end. These three sets of two were kind of like fraternal twins. They were not identical but you could see why they were together. There was the parable of the sower which sowed the good seed among the hearts (soils) of men and the fate of the seed was determined by the condition of the heart. When God was at work in the heart where He broke up hard ground, cleaned out rocky ground and eradicated the thorns in thorny ground, He would make bad ground good ground. The way you knew it was good ground was because the good seed produced a good root which had a good shoot and then produced good fruit some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold.

There was also an evil sower, Satan, who is not only an intimidator and infiltrator but he is an imitator. He likes to put out churchianity in place of Christianity in which the same vocabulary is used but doesn’t mean the same thing. Jesus gave us the wheat and the tares and at the end of the age the tares will be removed and thrown away but in the meantime in this world, Satan is creating these mimics of Christianity that in fact are

deceptive and lead to death, like the fungus on the bearded darnel of the tares where it would bring death to those who ate of it.

The Lord wants to teach us of the Kingdom where the world will dismiss it as insignificant like a little mustard seed and leaven but in reality this Gospel of the Kingdom goes into the heart of men, cities and nations and does its work many times unseen and keeps growing and growing. It is unstoppable. What is dismissed as insignificant rises up and the mustard seed becomes the biggest in the garden and the leaven, leavens the whole lump. Jesus' Kingdom will be and ultimately triumphant from the inside out.

The third set of twos is the Gospel of the Kingdom and Jesus is so glorious and magnificent that when this Jesus is met there is a total liquidation of everything in order for a possession of Him. It is not that the liquidation purchases the treasure but the liquidation is the way the King says you see the treasure. You don't put Him with other allegiances and affections but He becomes your life and now He is the One who defines and directs your life because for to me to live is Christ. He does this with the costly pearl and the hidden treasure where the treasurer finder sold everything for the costly treasure. It is a total liquidation in order to receive, not earn, the King and Kingdom of God. Yet when you liquidate everything you realize in comparison to Jesus all those things are nothing for nothing can compare to Him.

The seventh Kingdom parable was the Gospel of Kingdom being like a dragnet that moves throughout the world and at the end of the age those who know Christ will be affirmed and those who don't know Christ will be cast away into the lake of fire, the unendurable judgment that must be endure through all eternity. It is appointed unto to man once to die and then the judgment. At the judgment there are only two destinations, one is the new heavens and the new earth for those who have Christ as their treasure or for those who have rejected Him will be under the judgement of God for all eternity as the righteous Judge for by no means leave the guilty unpunished.

Jesus explained two and a half of these Kingdom parables and He has taken His time to explain the Kingdom of God. The disciples have heard this, so what happens next? I want to conclude this study by asking two questions and here are my two questions. In light of these seven Kingdom parables question one is, so what? The other question is so what next? Thankfully we can find out the answers to these two questions by the way this chapter ends. Jesus, the Mentor and the Model is not through teaching us and He will answer us with another parable. Then He will model for us so what next. The answer to those two questions will come by how Jesus starts off this next section with His own question.

This question of Jesus is one of my favorite questions to use in life. The question is 'do you understand?' Two times His disciples said 'could You explain this to us?' in Matthew 13. Like any good teacher now He asks them 'do you understand?' Do you know what preachers do when they get in the car with their wife after the Sunday sermon? They say something like 'honey, do you think it was clear or understood?' One of my mentors Jim Baird who is a pastor told this marvelous story about a conversation he had with his wife, Jane, who is the epitome of a pastor's wife, a southern woman and a steel magnolia when it comes to the truth. She is old enough now that she could care less what you think but before that she would tell Jim most anything she wanted to. Jim got in the car with her after a particular Sunday where he thought things went pretty well and

he said to his wife, ‘Miss Jane just how many great preachers do you think there are in the world?’ She said ‘Jim, I don’t know but I do know there is one less than you think right now.’

So the question is always, was it understandable? Whenever I have the opportunity to share the Gospel I always end my sharing with two questions. The first one is, do you understand what we’ve just gone through and then my next question is, is there any reason why you shouldn’t receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior right now. Christianity has to be understood. It’s not just an emotion for Paul says I know whom I have believed. So Jesus now turns to His disciples after taking them through this seven parable sermon in Matthew 13 and says ‘do you understand?’ and their answer is ‘yes.’ Commentators jump all over this when the disciples say yes because two chapters later they didn’t understand so they think they’re lying. I don’t think they’re knowingly lying but even though they don’t know it exhaustively they understand what they’ve heard thus far.

So Jesus takes their ‘yes’ and says ‘let Me tell you what it means.’ So He gives them another parable which will answer our two questions of so what and so what next. Matthew 13:51-52 says [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 (disciplined, discipled or taught) 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.”*

In this parable He is saying a couple of things. He is saying that if you understand then you know that the Gospel of the Kingdom is one, a treasure. It is a treasure beyond comparison, glorious and in your house. Your life now has this treasure. Secondly, while you can’t know it exhaustively, the Gospel of the Kingdom is understandable. You can know it accurately and intentionally but that is not all that He is saying.

He is saying something about the disciples of the Kingdom. He calls them disciples of the Kingdom for they have been discipled, trained and He calls them more than just disciples. Here are four things He is saying about those who are in the Kingdom of God, the disciples of the Kingdom. Number one, is that the disciples of the Kingdom must be instructed. Christianity is not intuitive or reflexive and it doesn’t start with human reason. Christianity starts with divine revelation – God reveals Himself and who He is. He gives us the mystery revealed, the mystery of His majesty, His glory and reveals Himself in creation and His Word. Christians are taught. We don’t live our Christian life flying by the seat of our pants. What does God’s Word say, for we must be instructed.

Number two, disciples of the Kingdom when they are instructed they become scribes, teachers and disciples. In the early part of the Old Testament the scribes were historians basically recording military and political history but from Ezra on scribes were teachers. Once you come into the Kingdom you must be taught and as you’re taught you become a scribe, a teacher. The learners are teachers and the teachers are learners. You are learning and you are giving away knowledge of this Gospel of the Kingdom.

Thirdly, all these disciples in the Kingdom of God are treasure rooms and treasurer masters. Your house, He says, contains treasure so not only do you have treasure rooms full of the Gospel of the Kingdom but you are the master of this house and that means you’re appointed responsible over this house. You are a steward of that treasure He has given to you.

The fourth thing is disciples of the Kingdom are treasure givers, responsible to give it away from old and new. What does it mean when it says old and new? The new (Testament) is the old (Testament) revealed. The old is the new concealed. It is one unified message that just gets clearer and clearer and clearer. All those Old Testament prophecies, types, shadows and symbols were all fulfilled in Jesus and the Kingdom that was in that nation now will go to all the nations and all His people will come from all of the nations but that's not new, it's the old explained in the new. In Abraham all the family of the earth shall be blessed so the old has come to fulfillment and the old is foundational and the new is the fulfillment of it. Augustine said the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. Now out of this treasure chest that now resides in you by the Holy Spirit as it points you to Christ and Christ is in you by His presence, and now you're responsible to give that treasure room away. As you learn it you teach it and as you know it you share it. That is what He has called you to be like and that's the answer to so what.

So what's next? Now Jesus the mentor goes to being a model, an example and shows them how to get started. Matthew 13:53-58 says [53] *And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, [54] and coming to his hometown (Nazareth) he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? [55] Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? [56] And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" [57] And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." [58] And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.*

He says now that you know about this Kingdom, watch Me and He goes home. Here is where you start. It is not where you finish. When Jesus gives the great commission He tells them to go make disciples and they will be His witnesses beginning in Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and then to the world. Start with Jerusalem but get all the way to Rome but don't start in Rome. Start at home, right here. The Kingdom of God is not a donut that you eat all the sweetness outside but a hole in the middle. So Jesus models it by showing them to start at home, their hometown.

Remember the demoniac who was out of his mind? Jesus set him free and he got in his right mind. Then he asked Jesus to join His church but Jesus answered 'no, go home and tell your family and friends what great things the Lord has done for you.' So he goes home. The next time Jesus comes back thousands are going to come to Jesus. They won't run Him out but they will run to Him, why? It was because He went home and started telling people. So Jesus goes home and models it for them.

What happens when Jesus goes home? They are astonished and scandalized. They take offense at Him. My guess is that there were some believers and ultimately there will be more believers but the majority thinks 'just who do You think You are?' They think this for two reasons. One is that they all seem to know His family. He comes from an ordinary family. His dad was a carpenter. Very likely Joseph is dead now because he isn't really mentioned during Jesus' public ministry. They all knew the story about Mary. His four brothers aren't exactly lighting the world on fire. Have you heard the way they make fun of Him? They don't believe Him. What about His sisters? Two of His sisters will end up at the cross – Mary and Salome. He may have had more than

two sisters but we know He had at least two. The Man is talking about being the Messiah. We know Him they said. Can anything good come from Nazareth?

Their second objection has to do with His credentials. Where did He get this wisdom? Who does He think He is? They are scandalized by Him. So they reject His message and Him. So Jesus says *“A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”* Notice what He says here. He affirms He is a prophet and He’s not just a prophet but The Prophet, the Priest and the King. Have you heard the phrase, familiarity breeds contempt? Jesus is basically saying that the last place who will honor a true prophet is his hometown. By the way, the last people who will honor Him will be His own family. His own family is rejecting Him in His hometown but there is coming a time that they will receive, worship and honor Him.

This chapter ends with the statement, *And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* People in the prosperity gospel have jumped all over this and that is not what He is getting at here. God is not dependent upon our faith to do His mighty works. What are we learning here? Jesus’ mission isn’t to do miracles for people. Miracles are instruments that create wonder to give a sign. So He is not about to affirm their lack of belief with a miracle. His mission is to seek and save the lost. He didn’t come to do miracles. He came to save His people from their own sins and miracles were always related to that.

Satan comes to Him in the wilderness and says “If You’re the Son of God turn these stones into bread. You’re hungry right?” His mission was not to eat and His mission was not to prove Himself to Satan. His mission was also not to turn stones into bread so He didn’t do it. He stayed on mission and therefore these who were scandalized that said ‘no’ He would not do miracles to affirm their unbelief or to make them think His existence was to do miracles for people. No, He has come to save us from our sins through faith therefore He would not do, could not do, miracles counterproductive to His mission to affirm their unbelief. So, Jesus mentors and models for us.

What do we need to learn? I want to give you three takeaways. For those who have received Christ as Lord and Savior, the Gospel of the Kingdom is in your heart and has brought you from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light. The Gospel of the Kingdom is at work within you. The first takeaway from this study is the Gospel of the Kingdom calls us to be voracious learners and listeners. If you’re in the Kingdom you won’t treat God’s Word, Church and Kingdom as an add-on in life. You will become voracious learners and listeners because you know it’s not intuitive. This is counterproductive to my old man, my human self-centered reasoning and I need to develop a Christ-centered, Christ exalting, Bible shaped world and life view.

So if you want to go deeper come to the next study about how we respond to this present age. There is a lot of application here. I’m a little bit excited but I’m grieving over what has happened in our culture and the impotence of the church. I’m a little excited though because the 21st century here is a little like the first century church in Jerusalem. They had to turn to Jerusalem and then go to Rome. In Jerusalem they encountered a culture of apostasy. Here was a city that God had visited with blessing after blessing that was not only rejecting the truth of God’s Word but they were rejecting the Truth standing in front of them, Jesus Christ. We have been visited in this nation with multiple providential blessings of God’s Gospel awakenings and now have turned

against Him. So we go to our own Jerusalem, a culture of apostasy. How did they do it? We'll look at that in our next study.

Then they were to go next to Rome which was filled with barbarian paganism. That is where you're headed for you live in a culture of apostasy and a culture of paganism. Watch what we do with our children. We used to have a generation that sacrificed themselves for the next generation. We now have a generation that sacrifices the next generation for ourselves. You pay our debts that we're running up. We're going to take your body parts so that we can add five years to our life. So how do you go into a pagan culture? I grieve that it is here but I'm kind of excited because that is exactly what they did then. Then went to Jerusalem first and then all the way to Rome and turned the world upside down. We won't get there without God's people becoming voracious learners and listeners. In other words, you need to make sure you're regularly sitting under faithful, expository preaching of the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ.

Secondly, you need to be in a small group, life on life, getting a model and a mentor. Jesus is doing just that here. He is mentoring and He is modeling – life on life with the twelve. You need that in your life and it's not just an add-on. You need to be giving it away – discipling – and you need to be disciplined.

Thirdly, you need to be in God's Word personally. You need to study to show yourself approved as a workman who does not need to be ashamed handling accurately the Word of Truth. You have to be trained and instructed in the Kingdom. That is what Jesus is telling us here.

The second takeaway is the Gospel of the Kingdom makes us both treasure keepers and treasure givers. You have a Gospel within you that you want to embrace and love and know the joy of your salvation – the unmerited love of Christ, the unbelievable grace of God that has saved you. Stay amazed at grace. Stay overwhelmed by the unmerited love of Jesus Christ. Notice that I didn't say unconditional love. If He could love you unconditionally then why did His Son go to that cross? His love was unmerited and He met the conditions of His justice to save us. Stay amazed of the treasure of the Gospel of the Kingdom and that the King died on the cross for you, is risen and by the power of the Holy Spirit is within you and that the King is going to bring you to be with Him in the fullness of that Kingdom in a new heavens and a new earth.

That is what God has yet before us. That is what God has identified for us. He has made us treasure room so be disciplined and He has made us treasure givers so start evangelizing. Take out of the treasure (Gospel) the old and the new and share it and give it away even as you rejoice in the treasure that fills you and through discipleship come to see it more and more glorious continuously.

The third takeaway is the Gospel of the Kingdom identifies the marks of treasure receivers and treasure rejecters. A treasure receiver is one who by faith receives Jesus. They become learners to be instructed in the Kingdom and the treasure grows dearer and dearer. The amazing thing is they start giving it away and the more they give it away the more they have because you can't out give Him. All of that is flowing upon you and in you.

The marks of a treasure rejecter are those who are scandalized by this Gospel. What if I were to tell you there was a possibility you could get to heaven if you lined your children up and had them kill themselves for the sake of this god? Or if I told you to

do this or that in order to possibly earn your way to heaven? There is a God who loves you and this God who has every right to judge you set aside those rights in this day in order to put His Son in your place to give you the gift of eternal life, a forever relationship with Him and a life now that is flowing and abundant even in a sin, broken world. Who has become His counselor? We have no idea all the things He is doing on this side of eternity.

This God so loves you. He will make you more than conquerors in Jesus Christ and that's what I offer – the gift of eternal life. You would think people would be lining up for that offer because it's appointed to men once to die and then the judgment. They end up lining up for the false premises of man-made religions and they are astonished to think of our offer. Just who do you think you are? They are scandalized by it.

Why are people scandalized by the Gospel? I think there are three reasons. Number one is they do not want to be told of their need of a Savior. You can do it lovingly, graciously, slip around the back, do this or do that with confidence, brokenness, with broken confidence but unless the Lord intervenes they are going to be scandalized by it. They will take offense at someone telling them they need a Savior. The second reason is that no one wants to be told they can't save themselves and their religion can't save them. The third reason is that no one wants to be told that Jesus is the Savior, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the only way into heaven.

Apart from or without God's unmerited love and amazing grace through Christ, men and women blinded by sin will not only reject Christ, they will search for reasons and invent reasons to reject Him. What about His family? Where is His credentials? Who does He think He is? They will be scandalized by the fact that you say they need a Savior, that you nor your religion can save you and by the exclusivity that Christ alone is the Savior of sinners. So today if you know Jesus you want to thank God for His unmerited love and amazing grace because He changed your default program from scandalized to conviction, confession and you received Him by faith. That is the only reason you're not scandalized for He worked in your heart and that is why you believed.

No matter how winsomely or thoughtfully or attractively it is explained, if the Gospel message is stated men and women will search out and invent reasons to reject it. You can just hear those people in His hometown questioning who He is and where He gets His message and yet Jesus has already told you who He is. I am the Son of God who has become the Son of Man to die on the cross to give you eternal life and I have come to take your place so that you can be with Me in My place and I am making a place for you. We know who He is and the question is not 'who does He think He is?'

The question is, who do you think you are? That is really the question. Am I a sinner that can't save myself? I need that Savior. Or am I the sovereign self where I'll stand on my own merits and I'll put my trust in the religions of men? Here is another question. Here is how I think you'll answer the question, 'who do you think you are?' The real question we need to ask ourselves is 'who do you think He is?' He has told you, so now who do you think you are. Do you need Him? He is ready to receive you just as you are. You can have that Christ filled treasure room today and no longer be a sin-saturated trash dump. You can have that Christ filled treasure room with so much treasure that you can give it away to others.

Who do you think He is? Start with, who do you think you are? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. The greatest question we'll answer in life is 'who do we think He is' but the key to that question is 'who do we think we are.' God, thank You that You take us from the trash heap of sin to make us treasure rooms of glory and grace. If you have not yet received Christ as Lord and Savior I pray today that you will simply come to Him. High King of heaven my Treasure Thou art, I have come to You and I am not scandalized by You for I am rejoicing in You because You at the cross made a way to rejoice over me. Jesus I come. Father, for those who have come, may they this day commit themselves to knowing Him from His Word and building the sweetness of the treasure in their hearts. May we intentionally with humility and confidence, with confident humility and humble confidence, share Him with others while praying 'Lord, by grace give hearts to those whom we speak that they will not be scandalized but will come to our Savior.' Behold our King for nothing can compare to Him. He shall reign forever, Amen.