

Matthew: Jesus, The King of Kings

Good Ground

Matthew 13:1-23

Today:

- Parable of The Sower
- The Purpose of Parables

Para - bles: (parallel ... parking?)

- Earthly stories with heavenly meanings
- a placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition, as of ships in battle
- a comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude
- an example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated
- A proverbs

Visual learners? Sometimes you just need to see it to understand it.

Pastor Chuck used to say not to teach the parables until you've been teaching for ten years. Thankfully, I've been teaching for longer than that. But it's still daunting.

Thankfully, Jesus explains it! It's His parable, His explanation!

With the Bible, if you just keep reading, it'll make sense. God will explain it!
Don't be afraid to read it, to study it for yourself!

[Pray]

13:1-9

Same day, went out and sat by the sea

Jesus liked the mountains, but he also likes being by the water

*Going to the beach is nice, the crowds are not. Quiet beach, sound of the water, the breeze
I don't think people were en masse hanging out in their underwear by the water in Jesus' day.*

If it was quiet, it didn't stay quiet long. The crowds find him.

The whole multitude.

Give the guy a minute to himself!

Crowds don't care, they're there for themselves. Not his benefit.

You can tell who's in it for what around church or work. Are they there to help? They'll help. Are they there for themselves, then they'll make that obvious.

In some sense, He knew they'd follow him there.

He got into a boat and sat.

I don't think he was necessarily trying to get away from them, but I'm sure the distance was nice.

Canadian personal space, NYC personal space

But also so he could talk to them all at once.

Acoustics of the water. Old amphitheaters.

A sower

Not of cloth, but of seed. Farming.

Ever plant grass or spread fertilizer? Little green wheelbarrow with spinner spins around and throws the seed over a wide area.

If you don't sow, you won't reap!

Side note: a lot of times in life we expect results without doing the work

Life doesn't work that way. But we all want the get rich quick scheme, the model body without the diet and exercise (take a pill!), the great marriage without the great sacrifice...

Galatians 6:7-8 NKJV - Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Hosea 8:7 NKJV - "They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; It shall never produce meal. If it should produce, Aliens [foreigners] would swallow it up.

Picture this farmer, with his seed in the pouch, flinging it out

When do you sow, in the spring (generally)! Before it's too hot. When the ground is soft. When there's a lot of rain. When there's plenty of time for the seed to grow and produce a crop before winter.

Our growing season is short. Greenhouses! Raised beds!

It lands in four places as he goes

1. Fell by the wayside

(edge of the property, actually means road, travelling)

2. Fell on rocky places

(something we know about in Montana)

3. Landed in areas with thorns

(stretch to think weeds - something we know about too. Bush, bramble, thorny plants)

4. Landed on good ground

The ideal spot, good soil, tilled, free from things that will prevent growth
Generally what farmers aim for.

What farmer is going to sow seed on the sidewalk?

On gravel pit? On a place with thorns and weeds?

Ah! If we're listening, it's a clue this isn't just about a farmer!

Jesus speaking to the crowd...many different people. Many different places in their hearts.

Four things happen as a result of sowing the seed

1. Birds devour it

Some birds in scripture generally mean bad things

Devour - eat up - **negative word**. Can mean **SQUANDER, WASTE**, utterly consume/destroy (devouring fire), consumption of mind and body by strong emotions

2. Sprang up quickly, but Summer comes, no depth/roots, sun scorches them.

So there's some soil, some nutrients for the seeds to grow. But just under the surface, it's as hard as can be.

Trees - just as much roots underground as there are branches above ground.

Didn't want to cut it down, but we had to cut down the only large tree we had.

Sun comes, it's hot. It's dry. Plants can't get the moisture and nutrients. They die.

Jonah 4. Ninevah, sitting back to watch judgment, hot sun, God brings a plant, God brings a worm. Jonah would rather die than see these Gentiles be saved by God.

3. Thorns choke any growth out

The seeds started to grow, but the plants around them took the nutrients. Took the

sunlight. Maybe even physically overcame them. Invasive species. Certain plants and vines that take over others.

When planting trees or culling forests, care has to be taken to make sure that each has the right amount of sunlight and they're not competing.

Christmas Tree hunting - some on a hillside looked great on one side but were bare on the other side. Didn't get any of the sunlight!

4. A CROP! FINALLY! This crop grows and grows and grows.

Some 100x, 60x, 30x. Maybe this season bears a lot, next season, season after.

What kind of seed does that in one season?!

Fruit trees and plants can take several seasons before they're ready to produce fruit.

Another clue that maybe we're not talking just plants here.

One seed, one plant, many branches each bearing fruit.

Modern seeds that is not replantable, have to keep buying from seed company

God's design can grow and regrow.

Scientists have at times regrown ancient seeds found in archaeological sites.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

I don't know about you, but aren't ears made for hearing? For listening?

If not that, what?

Jesus says, are you paying attention?

Can you hear what I'm actually saying?

If you have ears, and you're letting them do what I've given them to you for, then listen up!

:10-17

His disciples came to him...

Picture it - if he's still in the boat, them rowing out there, docking up next to him, back and forth

Psst, hey Jesus, why are you talking to them in these stories?

I think partly they were asking him to explain it to them, because they didn't understand...

But the disciples had ears to hear.

Given to you, but not to them...

Well, why not? Because the crowds weren't really interested.

Jesus giving you a parable is not necessarily a good thing - He's not telling you directly for a reason

Ever have to beat around the bush with someone because you know how they'll react? You know they won't take the news directly, but you have to say it anyway?

"Saying you're stupid" or "Wisdom chases you but you always outrun it"

This doesn't mean God saves some, and not others.

He gives everyone the choice.

But he also knows who will and who won't.

Mysteries of the Kingdom

It's only a mystery if you aren't seeking it.

God loves to reveal himself to us!

If we'd only seek. If we'd only ask. If we'd only knock.

Seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear, not understanding

They're not thinking! They're not paying attention!

How hard headed!

One-legged breakdancer

Para-olympic athletes

They're given "less" and do more than many who have no disabilities. Our disabilities are by choice - laziness, not exercising, not thinking, not studying, not using our given abilities

Whoever has - more will be given

God wants to keep blessing you. Keep revealing things to you. Keep talking to you.

But we can't learn if we don't listen.

"We don't really begin to know the scriptures until we obey them"

Luke 16:10-12 NKJV - "He who [is] faithful in [what is] least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in [what is] least is unjust also in much. "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true [riches]?"

"And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"

What he has will be taken away from him

Everyone will die. Everyone will face the judgment.

And without Christ, even if you're a winner here, you'll be a loser for eternity.

Therefore - I speak to THEM in parables

Who do you want to be? Them or a disciple? The choice is yours.

Do you want to understand the things of God? He will show you.

Do you not want to understand the things of God? Then he will hide them from you.

Then why do people not see? Why do people not believe?

Fulfilling Isaiah

The problem again is not an ability problem.

They have eyes. They have ears. They have a brain to understand what they're seeing and hearing...

It's a heart problem!

"The fool has said in his *heart* there is no God..." Ps 14:1

KJV - WAXED GROSS (like waning and waxing moon phases)

to make **thick, to make fat, fatten**

metaph. to make **stupid** (to render the soul dull or **callous**)

***Fat!** Have everything their heart desires. Full of their own ideas. Full of their own lusts. Just like our study in proverbs...the difference between being foolish and wise is doing*

1 Timothy 4:1-2 NKJV - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, **having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,**

Want to not hear God? Keep ignoring your conscience. Keep searing it when it's hurting from sin. From grieving the Holy Spirit.

Most apostasy, in its root, you'll find sinful deviance - money, power, sex

If they'd only listen!

The goal of God reaching out to people is TO HEAL THEM!

But we don't want healing do we? We don't want things to be fixed by doing it God's way.
We want others to tell us what we're doing is OK. We're just made this way.

Our sin isn't the problem, it's the person telling us our sin is sin is the problem!

Many righteous and prophets longed to see God in the flesh. To hear God's words out loud. And here he was. And the people around him were totally blind and deaf to Him.

:18-23

Therefore hear

*to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, not deaf
Attend, consider, understand, perceive
Get by hearing...learn*

God wants you and I to hear Him. He wants us to understand Him.
More than that, He wants us to KNOW Him.

**When we know Him and hear something else,
it'll immediately strike us as being weird, off, false**
Discernment comes from knowing the truth.

John 10:27 NKJV - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

John 15:15-16 NKJV - "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

The field - your heart

The seed - God's word

1. **Wayside** - Those who aren't believers, but are in earshot of the gospel, of the things of God. **They don't understand it.**
The importance of good teaching! Clear exposition. Verse by verse. Strong foundation in the scriptures and doctrine.

This understanding isn't just mentally - but again, the heart condition. A hard heart doesn't want to understand. Doesn't want to believe.

2. **Stony places - they find joy in the message, but they don't understand the cost**
 Many people love the good news, like the idea of Jesus, "happy birthday Jesus"
 But they don't know that it's a call to come and die.
 Sin must go. The old ways must go.

It's not your life plus Jesus. It's Jesus' life in place of yours - because yours is broken, helpless, hopeless, dead in sin.

No root in himself. It's not a deep faith.

The danger of the modern evangelical church. Light shows, Big productions. Free gifts at the door. But not depth of teaching. No depth of living. No depth of discipleship. "Seeker friendly" - it's for the numbers but in the end it costs the lives of many who hear with Joy, but aren't brought deep.

It's important that your faith be your faith. *Not mine. Not based on my life. Not based on someone you love who led you to the Lord. That you let God work it out in you "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" Phil 2:12*

Tribulation and persecution.

Tough times BECAUSE of faith. Personal ATTACKS because of faith.

3. **Thorns** - hear but bear no fruit. Why? Cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches choke out anything God begins to do.

I've seen people turn from God because they didn't get what they want.

A relationship. A job.

I've seen people start to get serious about God, then Satan comes in and brings in a relationship. Brings in money. And lures them away.

And they're far worse off than they were before.

1 Timothy 6:10 NKJV - For the love of money is a root of all [kinds of] evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Becomes unfruitful. The plant was looking good, starting to grow - but nothing comes of it. No change. Nothing for others to be blessed by, eat of.

4. **Good ground** - lots of fruit! At least 30x! Up to 100x!
If you could invest \$1 and make \$30, would you? How about \$60? How about \$100? It'd be foolish not to.

**What about heavenly investments? The word of God in you?
Is God getting his return on all he's invested in us?**

Jesus died for us, what has that done in our lives? Anything? What are we willing to give up for him in light of that? What are we willing to say or do or go? What goodness comes out of our life because of it?

God doesn't save us for nothing! God doesn't give us his word for nothing!

He gives it to us that our lives would become a beautiful field! A fruit filled garden!

Is there anything in our lives that He can come and eat?

That others can come and get a taste of God's good food?

Pruning is another matter from there - that's how he gets his multiples out of a well-producing plant.

Before we can bear fruit, we need to let God plow up our hearts.

Turn us into good ground.

Nobody is good ground to begin with.

We all have hard places. We all have desires not under the control of God yet.

We all care way too much about ourselves and our things and what other's think.

But God can change that.

Good ground hears the word AND understands it AND bears fruit.

It takes time. It's not overnight. It's day after day, season after season, year after year.

And by the way...plants don't have to struggle to bear fruit.

They just do when they're healthy.

Good soil. Good sun. Well watered. Well cared for.

John 15:4-8 NKJV - "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you [are] the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire, and they are burned. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

I think we all want to be Good ground. It's why we're here.

Let's ask God to make us that.