

# WHAT JESUS SAID – THEN AND NOW

## The Kingdom

TEXT: Mt. 13:1-33

INTRODUCTION – I confess to you that preaching a sermon series on what Jesus said, it's meaning then and application now, is very akin to the proverbial eating of an elephant. All of the sayings of Jesus make up an elephant size collection.

Not only are we restricted to taking one bite at a time, virtually every bite requires substantial chewing in order for the food to be properly digested. There is also the question of where do you bite. If you start on the leg, do you keep with the leg until all is gone, or do you move around to gain some variety in your meals?

Well, you pray for me as I wrestle with those decisions week by week that I will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit to choose those portions that are most needful for us as individuals and as a church, and that I myself will carefully and properly prepare the portion for your consumption on Sunday mornings.

Today, we go to Matthew 13 where the former tax collector turned disciple and evangelist tells us that Jesus went out of the house He was staying in temporarily and sat down by the sea. Such a multitude gathered around Him to listen to what He had to say that He got into a boat so that more could see and hear Him. Then Jesus spoke to the crowd in parables.

A **parable** has been properly described as **an earthly story with a heavenly meaning**. On this particular day, Jesus told the crowd four parables, rapid fire, one right after the other. All four shared a common theme: the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now normally what I would do is to preach four sermons on these four parables. And I have in fact preached a single message on one of these to you, and I am sure many of you recall every word, although it has been about three years ago.

However, Jesus told these four stories as a group for a reason, so I think there is value in us considering them together and that is what we are going to do this morning as we consider what Jesus said and as we also consider how we can do His words. Because we remember that

**We build our lives on the rock, and  
we withstand the storms of life,  
when we do what Jesus said.**

Matthew 13:3–9

<sup>3</sup> Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun

was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. <sup>7</sup> And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Later, Jesus disciples asked Him to explain the meaning of the parable to them.

### Matthew 13:18–23

<sup>18</sup> “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. <sup>20</sup> But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. <sup>22</sup> Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The first parable Jesus told shows us

## I. THE WAY PEOPLE ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- A. **People enter the Kingdom of Heaven by hearing the Word of God, specifically the gospel.** The seed sown is the Word of God.
- B. **Not everyone who hears the Word enters the Kingdom.**
  1. **Some have hard hearts** and the word bounces off of them like rocks on concrete, and the devil steals it away.
  2. **Some only make an emotional response** to the word and profess belief, but when they are put to the test concerning their faith, they renounce or abandon their merely emotional commitment.
- C. **Not everyone who hears the Word becomes fruitful in the Kingdom.**
  1. **Some are choked by their worry over worldly things or their preoccupation with the pursuit of riches.**
- D. **Some hear the Word, receive it, practice it, and become a fruitful citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Every one of us who hears this message today will respond in one of these four ways. Which are you, right now?

- Are these words of Jesus bouncing off of you right now like basketballs off a backboard?
- Are you saying “Yes, Lord, I will do what you say” while you sit here in church, but forget all about it when Monday rolls around and you are at school or at work.

- Are you saying “Yes, Lord” but you never get around to really obeying because you are preoccupied with your worries in the world or your desire to have more and more?
- Or will you say “Yes, Lord” and actually mean it and do it. That is what will make you fruitful in the Kingdom. That is what will build your life upon the rock.

We are going to witness this very thing happening among us with large numbers of people during our TEAM IMPACT CRUSADE. The gospel is going to be sown.

- We will witness that word bounce off of hard hearts. While it is even being preached, one will be on his cell phone, another talking to a friend, another counting lights in the ceiling.
- We will witness shallow, emotional responses. Some will come to the front, go to counseling, and tell us how they are going to start coming to church. Then we will never see them again. If we call, they will not answer, or they will always have an excuse, but we will never see them come back.
- Others will go home with a genuine intent to follow through, but they will get caught back up in their own worries and pursuit of more things, and we will likely not see them again either, or not very often.

And if you do not understand that this is the way Jesus told us it will be, you can become very discouraged. Why do evangelism events if this is what happens. Or we can become very critical. “Maybe the evangelist did not do a good enough job of explaining.” “Maybe the counselors did not do a good job of counseling.” “Maybe our church did not do a good job of follow up.”

Now let me be clear.

- The evangelist needs to present the pure gospel message.
- Counselors should be diligent in helping people understand.
- A church needs to do all we can to not just make converts but disciples.

However, folks, Jesus is telling us that even when everybody involved in the sowing of the seed of the gospel does their sowing well, the seed of God’s Word falls on hearts that are like the soils of the earth: hard, shallow, thorny, or good; and people make four kinds of responses to the Word God has sent to their heart.

We cannot change that! Even Jesus got these four responses. So, why do we do evangelistic events if three quarters of the people are going to respond this way? We do it for the 25%. Some of those who hear the gospel will believe in the depths of their heart. They will be genuinely and eternally saved.

We sow the seed for them! We do it because sowing the seed of the gospel is the only way they can get into the Kingdom of Heaven. **If we don’t sow the seed, nothing grows!** If we don’t proclaim the gospel, nobody gets in!

The second parable Jesus told is

### Matthew 13:24–30

<sup>24</sup> Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. <sup>26</sup> But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ <sup>28</sup> He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ <sup>29</sup> But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”

He explained it in

### Matthew 13:37–43

<sup>37</sup> He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

This parable shows us

## II. THE CONDITION OF THE KINGDOM IN THIS AGE

**A. Right now the world is a mixture of the lost and the saved** living side by side.

**B. It is not the job of the saved to try to uproot, weed out, or dispose of the lost.**

1. Because we cannot always tell the difference
2. Because in the power and providence of God, through the proclamation of the gospel, a tare can become wheat, the lost can become saved!

**C. A time of harvesting is coming.**

1. The angels will gather the lost and cast them into the furnace of fire called hell.
2. The saved will be gathered into the eternal Kingdom of Heaven and shall shine with the glory of God like the sun, forever.

**D. That is why the sowing of the seed of God’s Word, especially the sowing of the seed of the gospel is so important.**

1. Today, tares become wheat when they hear and believe.
2. **Today, sons of the wicked one become sons of the Father and of the Kingdom when they hear the gospel and believe.**
3. But there is coming a day, and it is closer than it has ever been before, when a tare shall be a tare forever and cast into the furnace,

When the children of the devil will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the devil forever, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Friend, listen. Whomever God puts upon your heart or gives you opportunity to invite to TEAM IMPACT, do not hesitate. Do not procrastinate. If they are lost, eternity is at stake. The gospel is their only hope. Perhaps if they hear, they will be one of those who truly believe.

Finally, Jesus told two more parables, both short, both with the same message, and both so plain that they needed no further explanation.

### Matthew 13:31–33

<sup>31</sup> Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, <sup>32</sup> which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

<sup>33</sup> Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

Folks, Jesus was telling us

### **III. GOD’S PLAN FOR BUILDING HIS KINGDOM IS GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL.**

Some people are critical of Jesus saying that the mustard seed is not the smallest of seeds and it does not grow into a tree. Folks, the mustard seed is the smallest seed that the Palestinians to whom Jesus was speaking ever planted in their gardens. And at a certain season, it could grow into a plant reaching ten or twelve feet in height whose branches became woody enough to support the nest of a bird. Believe me, the One Who spoke the world into existence does not stand in need of a biology lesson.

And His Kingdom shall prevail and will one day cover the earth.

Yes, it started as small as a mustard seed, and its growth at times seems painfully slow. But folks, as we have seen, people can only enter the Kingdom of Heaven one person at a time. Ten thousand may hear a gospel message at once, or ten million by way of television or radio, but only one by one can they decide if they will believe and trust in Jesus who died for their sins and rose from the dead.

And the Kingdom spreads like yeast permeating a new batch of bread, often unnoticed, often quietly and without fanfare, but working according to the power of God, driven by the Spirit of God, one by one, convicting men of sin and convincing them of Christ as the only way of salvation.

But one day, the multitude of those redeemed by faith in Christ, shall cover the face of a new earth, greatly enlarged and enhanced beyond our present domain; and each shall have a home in the New Jerusalem, a mansion prepared by Jesus Himself, without mortgage or maintenance, living also in a new body, a resurrection body that will never hurt nor ail. But though their number shall be like the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky, yet the Master will know each by name and will remember the time, He sowed the seed of the gospel in the soil of their heart, and they said, Yes, Lord. I believe. And they really did. They trusted Christ as Lord and Savior, and received from Him the gift of eternal life.

Into the Kingdom of Heaven they came, one by one.

**CONCLUSION:** And so you can do today, if in the depth of your being you will say yes and mean yes to Christ, and trust Him as the Savior who paid the price for your sin and rose from the dead, and invite Him to become the Lord and Master of your life.