

The Kingdom of God is Like . . .

Studying the parables of Jesus leads us directly into a study of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. Why? Because when Jesus spoke in parables He was sharing the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven (or God) in a way that only those with “ears to hear” and “eyes to see” would understand.

Who are those with ears to hear?

- Those whom the Holy Spirit has chosen to hear and see what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the ability to understand the scriptures.
- Do any of you lack wisdom? Then come to the Lord and ask for it. He will give it liberally to those who ask.
- Do you desire to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus says we are to Ask, Seek and Knock. And to everyone who ask, seeks and knocks he/she will find what is sought.

Whether Jesus spoke publicly to the masses or privately with his disciples, He often spoke of the Kingdom of God. ***This was his primary message.***

- Why? Why is this message so important?
- Here are some questions to keep in mind as we dive into the study of the Kingdom of Heaven.

What is the Kingdom of Heaven? *It is a standard brought to earth – a reigning in the physical realm, the spiritual realm and a personal heart condition.*

Why was this message important to Jesus? Each parable Jesus shares, he does with a specific purpose in mind. What is that purpose? Of all the things he can teach us, why is this important?

Why do we need to know about it? How does this help us on our journey through life on earth? Life application. The message without application is fruitless. It's not enough that we hear, we must hear and then do. We must allow the message to penetrate our hearts, break up the fallow ground and produce a crop. If we cannot share the message with others, have we even understood it ourselves? That is the true test of understanding.

How does this prepare us for eternity? Think about each parable and how it applies to eternity. Does it excite us? Does it warn us? Does it offer promises? While Scripture is certainly a lifeline down here, that is not all it is good for. Scripture is our glimpse into Heaven. It is a snapshot of what we can expect when we get to the other side. When you are reading and studying the parables, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how this applies to eternity.

We will examine the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven found in the Gospels individually and then, after we have studied all of them, we will look back and see if we can trace

overarching themes that give us even deeper understanding. Expect to be surprised. There are many treasures in this storehouse and we will discover them together.

Parables of Jesus

From The Gospel of Matthew:

13:1-23	The Parable of the Sower (Mark4:1-20, Luke 8:1-15)
13:36-43	The Parable of the Weeds
13:31-35	The Parables of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-32) and the Yeast (Luke 13:18-21)
13:44-46	The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl
13:47-52	The Parable of the Net
18:10-14	The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)
18:21-35	The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant
20:1-16	The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
21:28-32	The Parable of the Two Sons
21:33-46	The Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:9-19)
22:1-14	The Parable of the Wedding Banquet
25:1-13	The Parable of the Ten Virgins
25:14-30	The Parable of the Talents
25:31-46	The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

The Gospel of Mark:

4:26-29	The Parable of the Growing Seed
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The Gospel of Luke:

10:25-37	The Parable of the Good Samaritan
12:13-21	The Parable of the Rich Fool
14:16-24	The Parable of the Great Banquet
15:8-10	The Parable of the Lost Coin
15:11-32	The Parable of the Lost Son
16:1-13	The Parable of the Shrewd Manager
18:1-8	The Parable of the Persistent Widow
18:9-14	The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
19:11-27	The Parable of the Ten Minas

The Gospel of John:

10:1-18	The Shepherd and His Flock
15:1-8	The Vine and the Branches

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:1-15

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven?

- All Hearts are given the same Seed.

- It is the soil (HEART), not the Seed that determines the yield. The Seed is perfect.
- Expectation of Preparedness
- Expectation of Fruitfulness
- We can expect varying levels of fruitfulness – but we are not told why this is so.

Seed = Word of God

Sower = Speaker of the Word of God (Jesus, Believer)

Landing Place = The condition of the hearer's heart

There are four heart conditions upon which the seed is scattered.

1. Path
2. Rocky Places
3. Thorns
4. Fertile Soil

Path = A Heart With No Understanding, The Word Cannot Penetrate (Hardened)

The one whose heart is like seed that falls on the path is hardened. This heart hears the Word but does not understand the message – so the devil snatches it away. Imagine an acorn bouncing off of a hardened dirt footpath. It never had a chance to burrow down, grow roots, popup through the topsoil and bear fruit.

Rocky Places = A Heart Where The Word Cannot Reside (No Root)

The one whose heart is like soil in rocky places, hears the word, receives it with joy, but only briefly. When trouble or persecution comes BECAUSE of the Word, he falls away. Imagine an acorn that falls on the ground that is rocky. It may try to burrow but there is no way to spread its roots. Since its roots are weak if at all, the slightest storm or disturbance will dislodge it.

Thorns = A Heart Where The Word Cannot Grow (Does Not Produce Fruit)

The one whose heart is like thorny soil, hears the Word but the worries of life and deceitfulness of wealth choke it out, making it unfruitful. Imagine now that acorn that falls onto soil and it can burrow and grow roots, but weeds grow up all around it (maybe Cedars) choking the life out of the sprouting. It will never become what it should have, it will be dwarfed or crooked, or weak.

Fertile Soil = A Heart That Is Prepared (Produces Fruit)

The one whose heart is like fertile soil, hears the Word and understands it! He produces a crop (bears fruit). Some 100x. Some 60x. Some 30x. Now imagine this acorn. This acorn fell on good soil, burrowed in, its roots spread deep and wide and gathered nourishment for the tree, the tree grew big and strong, and eventually produced a crop of acorns, each with the ability to reproduce after its own kind.

Why was this message important to Jesus?

- Jesus is teaching us about the Kingdom of Heaven. What we can expect from it, how to be prepared for it on earth and in heaven.
- He wants us to understand our part.
- He wants us to understand the power of the Message – the Word, and the responsibility of the hearer.

What is the application?

- When we preach the Word of God – there will always be some hearers that cannot receive what is being said. This can be as high as 75% of the audience.
- This is not due to the preaching.
- This is not due to the message.
- This is due to the condition of the heart of the hearer.
- Even among those whose heart is fertile, only 1/3 will produce 100 fold.
- Not all will multiply the teaching at the same rate, or yield the same return.

How does this help prepare us for this life:

- We should each evaluate our own hearts. Are we keeping our hearts fertile, receptive? Or have we allowed our hearts to become dry and hardened? Can the Word penetrate?
- Do we hear the message and let it grow roots in our heart? Do we nurture it? Does the Word produce a crop? 100 fold? 60 fold? 30 fold? Jesus said, “Every teacher of the law (or believer) who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” Matthew 13:52
- Our lives should be producing crops for Jesus. Through every circumstance, every victory, every sorrow, our lives should be leading others to Him. That is the result of having fertile soil in your heart. This is a picture of the believer’s heart. This is what the Lord expects of each of us.

How does this prepare us for eternity?

- Refocus our attention back on the Kingdom of Heaven. This is our destiny. While it is our mission to help spread it here on earth, it is also where we will spend eternity.
- It is not just a place – but it is also a way of perceiving, away of interacting, it is the condition of reality in Heaven.
- Our hearts are being taught how to receive the Word of God, how to prepare ourselves to produce fruit that is spiritual, not worldly, and continually multiply this truth because our eternal home is a spiritual one.

The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:36-43

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven?

- God cares about the welfare of His children on earth. He is actually protecting us while the wickedness grows up alongside the believers.

- God is not unaware of the evil in the world. Ultimately there will be justice. The Kingdom of Heaven is just. Wickedness will be punished.

Good seed/Wheat: sons/daughters of the Kingdom /the righteous

Sower: Jesus

Field: the world

Enemy: Satan

Weed seed/ weeds: sons of Satan

Harvest Time: End of the Age

Harvesters: Angels

Bundles to be Burned: Weeds

Barn: Where the wheat is gathered

- The Son of Man (Jesus) has sown into the world the sons (and daughters) of the Kingdom (of Heaven), ie. the righteous ones.
- Simultaneously, Satan has also sown into the world his sons (and daughters), ie. everything that causes sin and those who do evil.
- These have both been allowed to grow up together. Their roots have intermingled under the same soil.
- If the evil is removed while the good is still growing, both will be damaged. Therefore, the Lord has determined that both shall grow up together until the time of the harvest.
- At the time of harvest, the Angels shall be sent to gather from upon the earth ALL who do evil. These will be thrown into the Lake of Fire – this is the second death – the place reserved for Satan, the beast and those who worship and do evil.
- Then the Angels shall gather those who belong to the Lord and they will shine like sun in the Kingdom of their Father (God almighty).

Why was this message important to Jesus?

- To give hearers hope.
- To acknowledge the evil in the world and the injustice of it.
- To illustrate the Lord has compassion on his children. He knows they are plagued by the enemy.
- To reassure us that this is only for a time. There is a pan.

What is the application?

- In this simple parable is found some profound answers to the perennial question: Why does God allow evil to exist?

- In this parable, Jesus tells us that evil and good are growing side by side. The Lord is aware of this.
- To remove the evil before the harvest is ready, would inflict harm upon the children of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- How? We are not told how, only that by removing evil, you may “root up the wheat with them.”
- We know there is a fullness of time before the Great Harvest. This parable reassures believers that when the day of Harvest comes, the evil will be confronted and destroyed at last.

How does this help prepare us for this life?

- This parable gives believers hope that there is a plan. The Lord is aware of the evil in the world. He is not ignorant or indifferent.
- We also see that there is a timetable. There is a “day” that is coming and that day follows an agenda that is ultimately for our good. So while it may not look good, or feel good in the interim, we are reminded that good will indeed triumph over evil in the end.
- This perspective helps us endure hardships, disparity, injustice and pain and suffering caused by evil in the world. This is not our permanent condition. Harvest time is coming.

How does this prepare us for eternity?

- The children of the Kingdom of Heaven have been planted here on earth by Jesus himself.
- We are sojourners. We are journeymen passing through. This is not our home.
- Ultimately we will be gathered by the one who planted us to be taken home to his “barn” aka Heaven.
- This is not haphazard as it often feels. There is a plan and it is for our ultimate good.
- The evil around us will not be found in Heaven. That is good news indeed.

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

Matthew 13:31-35, Mark 4:30-32 (just the Mustard Seed), Luke 13:18-21

The Kingdom of Heaven is like. . .

A Mustard Seed:

Though it is the smallest of seeds, becomes the greatest among herbs, birds can perch on it.

The Yeast:

A woman took leaven and worked it into three measures of meal, until it was all leavened.

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why did Jesus teach this?

- The Kingdom of Heaven is at work all around us – even when it seems small or when we cannot see it all. We will see the result of it. We need to be aware of it.

What is the application?

- Although it seems small and insignificant, the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven will grow larger than anyone expects. It will work its way through every fabric of life and fill every space until it has accomplished its purpose.
- As yeast transforms flour, the Kingdom of Heaven transforms life. How does Yeast work?

“Yeast is a single-celled fungus, and the cells are still alive when you mix them into the dough. The yeast releases enzymes that convert the flour starch into sugar, which the cells absorb and metabolize. This process releases CO2 gas, which forms bubbles that become trapped in the stretchy dough. During baking, the oven’s heat expands the bubbles even further.”

How does this help prepare us for this life?

- I believe this parable is an illustration of the need for faith. Both, seeds and yeast, are unseen forces at work accomplishing their purposes. The purpose of each is written in their DNA. They will not deviate from the mission – whether to grow a tree or to leaven the dough.
- We can trust that the Kingdom of Heaven also has its own DNA so to speak. It has a mission and it will accomplish its mission – even when we can’t see it.
- More precisely – we should expect the end of the mission to be invisible to our senses until it is near complete. Only as it nears its end will we see evidence that it has been at work. The result will be so much greater that we can imagine, a transformation from what we knew at the beginning – just like the mustard seed and the yeast in raw dough.
- But we will see some evidence. When the seed begins to sprout we can see it growing incrementally. When the yeast mixes with the dough, we can see bubbles and the dough rising.
- What I also find peculiar is that both of these images are living. The seed and the yeast are both living organisms. The Kingdom of God is not STATIC. We can expect the Kingdom of God to be dynamic. Living, active, transformative.

How does this prepare us for eternity?

- Just as we can’t see the inner workings of the seed or the yeast, we can be sure it is working to bring an end result. Some day the Kingdom of Heaven will be revealed in all of its glory.
- The completed work will be apparent and those of us who are children of the King will enter into that place.

- These parables – the seed and the yeast – remind us that even though we cannot see what is taking place, and we cannot see the fullness of it, we can be assured that it is at work all around us.
- Just as the seed and the yeast do much of their work unseen, so too the Kingdom of Heaven is doing its work unseen. But in due time we will know the fullness of its majesty.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

Matthew 13:44-46

The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .

A hidden treasure . . .

A fine pearl . . .

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why Did Jesus include this?

- In both of these parables the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a treasure of great worth. So great, that when it is discovered a person will sell everything else he has to obtain this one treasure.
- The Kingdom of Heaven is more valuable than anything else we have ever known, or could possess on earth.
- The Kingdom of Heaven is hidden. It must be “discovered”.
- When the Kingdom of Heaven is discovered, nothing else compares. It is the only thing worth possessing, even if it costs you everything to obtain it.

What is the application?

- In both parables the one who discovers the great treasure, sells everything he has to obtain the treasure.
- Jesus is trying to teach us what is of true value.
- He uses a buried treasure and a fine pearl. These are material treasures, something we can understand.
- Yet he says the Kingdom of Heaven is like this. It’s a treasure. It’s buried. It’s hidden.
- It takes searching, digging, to find it. However the one who does the work or searching it out, is rewarded. He is so very much rewarded that he is willing to part with all else he owns just to possess this one thing.

How does this help prepare us for this life?

- What is your priority? What is most precious to you in this life? Is it a home? A car? A person? An accomplishment?
- Do we understand the great wealth that the Kingdom of Heaven brings?

- There are other verses where Jesus instructs us to trust the Lord to take care of our physical needs, while we focus on Kingdom business. The Word says that the Lord owns it all. That He is a good father, generous toward His children. Do we believe this?
- Do we trust Him to take care of us, while we are about His business?
- How does this thinking change our priorities?
- Are we chasing Him or are we like a dog, chasing our own tails?

How does this prepare us for eternity?

- The great reward is waiting for us. A reward greater than anything here on earth is waiting for us on the other side of this life. If we can grasp this, we will look forward with great anticipation, longing for the day we can called heavenward.
- We will also endure hardship, pain, suffering, difficulty, rejection when we know what is coming.
- We will celebrate the home-going of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Apostle Paul understood this – he said, to live is Christ, to die is gain.
- Do we believe what Jesus says? Do we trust his report?
- Jesus had the advantage of knowing where he came from. He knew where he was headed when he went to the cross. He was able to endure the torture, the brutality, the abandonment, the agony **because** he knew what was waiting for him. Not only that, he knew the cross, his sacrifice was the ONLY way to make it possible for us to be there with Him some day.

The Parable of the Net

Matthew 13:47-52

The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . . a fisherman's net.

- A net was let down into a lake and caught ALL kinds of fish.
- When it was full, the fisherman pulled it up on the shore.
- They sat down and collected the good fish in baskets
- They threw the bad fish away
- At the **end of the age** the angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous
- The wicked will be thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why did Jesus teach this?

A day is coming when all will be gathered and then separated.

- There will be no escape.
- ALL will be gathered and sorted.

- The gathering will happen suddenly, as a net gathers fish. Without warning.

What is the application?

FISH = All people

GOOD FISH = the Righteous (believers in Jesus, reconciled by HIS blood, whose names are written in the book of life)

BAD FISH = The wicked

NET = the Day of Reckoning at the End of the Age (Rev. 20:12-13)

FISHERMAN = Angels commissioned by God

GATHERED INTO BASKETS = Taken to Heaven

THROWN AWAY = Thrown into the fiery furnace, *lake of fire* (Rev. 20:10, 20:15)

How does this prepare us for life?

- No surprises here.
- The Lord knows the wicked from the righteous.
- We are not fooling anyone.
- If we know this, how should we live today?
- What if the net was let down today? How would we adjust our day? Our focus? Our prayers?

How Does this prepare us for eternity?

- Knowing there is an inescapable day of separation and judgment should cause us to cling to the Gospel of Truth. We are saved by grace (the atoning work of the Cross) not by works, that no man may boast.
- Since we know in advance this day is coming, we can set our focus on how to help those around us be prepared for that day.

After Jesus taught this he said “Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

- Why did he say this at this time?

- What does this say about those of us who understand these parables?

- What does he expect of us?

Again – ask yourself WHY? Why is Jesus teaching this? What are we to do with these TRUTHS?

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Matthew 18:10-14, Luke 15:1-7

The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . . a shepherd who searches for his one lost sheep.

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why did Jesus teach this?

What is the application?

How does this prepare us for life?

How Does this prepare us for eternity?

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Matthew 18:23-35

The kingdom of heaven is like . . . a king who wanted to settle accounts

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why did Jesus teach this?

What is the application?

How does this prepare us for life?

How Does this prepare us for eternity?

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard
Matthew 20:1-16

What does this teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven? Why did Jesus teach this?

What is the application?

How does this prepare us for life?

How Does this prepare us for eternity?
