

PARABLES OF JESUS PART 5

Hidden Treasure – Pearl of Great Price – Dragnet – Head of the Household

The “kingdom of heaven” is the subject of Matthew Chapter 13. That is where we have been camping out for the last couple of weeks in our study of the parables. In that chapter are eight “kingdom of heaven” parables. This morning, we are going to wrap up the last three of those.

What the Kingdom of Heaven Is – A Review

Let me briefly summarize what I believe the kingdom of heaven is as Jesus is describing it in these parables. The kingdom of heaven is this concept that a lot of people have heard about their whole lives, but they just haven't wrapped their head around what it means. So, that is why I have been driving this point home. I really believe that Jesus in this chapter is trying to tell us (show us) what the kingdom of heaven is. Jesus is describing it.

Q1 serves as a review outline. It was an easy one, right? Fill in the blanks. This is all stuff you have heard before. The terms “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of WHAT” mean the same thing? GOD. Kingdom of God. Kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God – same thing. WHO is the only New Testament writer that uses the term “kingdom of heaven”? MATTHEW. He is the only one that uses it. The other writers say “kingdom of God” or “the kingdom.” The “kingdom of heaven” is ruled by THE WHAT? It is kind of obvious – the KING, capital K, the King, God Himself.

The “kingdom of heaven” has been established both in heaven and WHERE? EARTH. Here on earth. That is a big part of what we are seeing, here on earth. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). You all know the Lord's Prayer. Jesus the Messiah King returned WHERE rather than set up His kingdom on earth. Where did He go? Back to HEAVEN. He ascended back to heaven. Remember that His disciples had fully expected that He would set up His kingdom. They were

arguing about who would be the greatest in His kingdom. But He did not do that, did He? Instead, He returned to heaven, His mission being complete. And when Jesus returns again, He will WHAT? REIGN. He will reign. That is when He will set up His kingdom, Revelation 20, and He will reign on earth for 1000 years.

So then, the kingdom of heaven first arrived in the Person of Jesus Christ, when He came the first time. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17) and Jesus was there. And then the kingdom of heaven will be established quite literally on earth when Jesus returns again and sets up His kingdom.

The Mystery of the Church Age

That is where your biblical timeline comes in [a class handout]. So, what about the "in-between" period, between Jesus's first and second coming, the period of time that we are living in now? This period of time is called the WHAT? The "CHURCH Age. That is the period of time we are living in right now. Jesus's parables unlock WHAT about the kingdom of heaven? MYSTERIES. The reason they are called "mysteries" is because they were not revealed in the Old Testament. The parables unlock mysteries about this period of time we are living in, the Church Age, that the people of His day would not have been aware of because they were not talked about in the Old Testament. So, all of that gives you a brief summary about the kingdom of heaven.

Q2, True or false? When Jesus spoke in parables, He was emphasizing truths taught in the Old Testament that everybody already knew. That is false because of this verse here – Matthew 13:35: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden [it is not known] since the foundation of the world." So, Jesus is teaching things that were not previously known to His audience.

Q3, which parables does Jesus explain to His disciples? Now, there are eight parables in this chapter. How many does He actually give an explanation of? They are the long ones. The Parable of the Soils and in v

18-23 He explains that. The Parable of the Weeds and Tares was explained in v 36-43. All the other parables (in this chapter) are short and He does not really give an explanation. So, it was those two [parables].

The Hidden Treasure

This is actually two parables in one. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a hidden treasure and to an expensive pearl. These two illustrations go together. Even though they are a little different (there are some nuances), they drive home the same spiritual truth. Here is the parable, beginning in v 44...

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

You think about hidden treasure. If it was a box or a chest buried in the ground, he would have just taken them and left. But there is something about this land. Maybe there are minerals in it. Maybe oil is there. Maybe this is in Texas or Oklahoma. There is something valuable in this land.

The Pearl of Great Value

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, upon finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46).

Q4, in both of these parables, the main characters, the man in the field and the merchant, recognize WHAT about their discovery? That what they found was unique and had great value – so valuable that they sell everything they have to buy it! Can you think of anything so valuable that you would be willing to sell your house and your cars and all you had to get it? That gives you some idea of how tremendous what they found was.

There is one significant difference between these two parables. Did you catch it? The man in the first parable stumbles across his buried treasure when he is NOT looking for it. He finds it by accident. The

merchant, on the other hand, as part of his job is actually looking for quality pearls when he spots one that has great value. So, that gives you the answer to Q5. True or false? Both characters in this parable were actively searching for what they ended up finding. It is false because they were NOT actively searching. One was and one was not.

The lesson illustrated here is that nothing we possess is more valuable than the kingdom of heaven – this thing we have been talking about. It is a good thing that we know what it is! In His other teachings Jesus emphasizes the importance of laying up treasures in heaven rather than treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19-21) – heavenly-minded things. That is what we need to have. He teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God (which is the same thing as the kingdom of heaven) and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). He instructs a wealthy young man who outwardly appears to be interested in entering the kingdom of heaven to sell everything he has and give the proceeds to the poor (Matthew 19:16-22). That young man went away sad because he had much to lose.

Augustine in his autobiography *The Confessions* tells about a struggle he had for a long period of time in his life. He had a difficult time parting with the delights of his sin. [Augustine lived an immoral life characterized by a passion for sexual immorality and an obsession with earthly pleasures.] He found freedom from his sinful lifestyle through the superior joy of knowing Christ. The delight he found in a relationship with Jesus Christ far surpassed any of the passing delights of his life apart from the Lord. And he talks about it in that book.

Seeking Him or Not, God Can Still Be Found

Some people actively search for the answers to life. They are seekers. Others just sort of go through the same old routine of their life day after day not really searching, but just existing. It does not matter whether one is actively seeking Christ or not. He or she can still find Him. He can save you in either case. Once Jesus IS found (whether it is by accident or in

diligently searching) the question is: Do you recognize the importance, the value, of what you have just found?

The Apostle Paul was most certainly NOT seeking Jesus when he met Him on the Damascus Road. But you all know what happened. Paul, who was still known as Saul at the time, encountered Jesus – knocked off his horse and the blinding light. After that Saul followed Jesus. As a result, his whole life, his whole purpose, his mission changed drastically. Others actively sought Christ. Remember the wise men in the Christmas story? They came from a faraway country. They traveled hundreds, maybe even thousands of miles. We do not really know exactly where they came from but it was a long distance away. And they were following a star. They knew about this star. It was leading them to the [Jewish] Messiah. So, they followed it all the way to Bethlehem. They were seeking a king, the king of the Jews. They were seeking the Christ child. It took them a while. By the time they found Him, Jesus was no longer a little baby in a manger. He is in a house. He is a young boy. When they see Him, they fall down and worship Him and give Him their gifts. We do not know anything about the wisemen afterwards like we do about the Apostle Paul (after he found Jesus). But we assume that this experience changed their lives.

Both Paul and the wise men recognized the value of the kingdom of heaven in the Person of Jesus Christ even though their roads to Him were literally and figuratively quite different. As a result of their faith, God blessed them far beyond what they could have ever imagined.

Nothing that we possess in our lives as Christians is more valuable than the kingdom of heaven. Now we have focused a lot of our attention so far on the kingdom of heaven and what it is corporately – the body of Christ here in the Church Age. It is that. It is the church carrying out the Great Commission to be sure. But for you and me personally, the kingdom of heaven includes such real experiences as our salvation. Then it is our submission to the will of God, to the Holy Spirit in our lives; our spiritual walk with Christ; our relationships with our heavenly Father and with each other, relationships with other believers. So, none of us who have been

saved can really place a value on any of that, can we? You look back on it and say, "where would I be without that?" It is far beyond anything that we can put a value on.

Q6 is a personal reflection question. Thinking back on your own salvation experience, were you actively pursuing Christ whenever you got saved? *[Class responses included "yes" and "no" and "not completely."]*

Here is the thing -- God wants to be found. He wants us to seek Him and He wants us to find Him. God desires that everyone be saved. The Bible tells us that. His will is [for us] to get saved and then to have a closer walk, an intimate fellowship with Him. He is not going to force us against our will to do that. What God does instead, being the sovereign God that He is, He works through circumstances that He places in our lives that will prompt us (a relative or a tragic circumstance or whatever) to make a decision one way or the other.

CONTRACT OF LORDSHIP

I, the undersigned do hereby commit myself to trust Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and to serve Him all the remaining days of my life. I agree henceforth to love the Lord with all my heart, all my soul, and with all my mind.

I understand that when I am _____ years of age, God will lead me to _____
_____.

During my _____ years of marriage, I understand that God will give me _____ children. When I am _____ years of age, my son/daughter will _____.

After _____ years of working for _____, I understand that God will lead me to _____
_____.

When I am _____ years of age, God will bring about _____ in my life, at which time I will _____.

I understand that for the next _____ years/months/days (circle one) that I remain alive on this earth, God has directed me to continue to trust Him fully no matter what may arise.

Signed and agreed to this the _____ day of _____ 19 _____

Contract of Lordship

When I became a Christian – way back when – I committed my life to Jesus Christ. That is what my salvation was, a commitment. In essence, I signed a “Contract of Lordship.” I did not know it at the time. But what I did as a young boy is I signed this contract back in 1968 and I asked God to fill in all the blanks. I said, “I am going to let YOU fill in the blanks of my life.” And He did. He filled all those blanks in. Then I placed myself in His hands to do with me as He willed. I realized that some of these [life events] were not going to be pleasant or what I would have chosen. But I let God fill in the blanks of my life. By the way, you did the same thing whether you know it or not.

When we get saved, we are no longer our own. We now belong to Him, to do with as He wills in all areas of our lives. As Christians we serve

our Lord and Master, not ourselves. I think it is wonderful that we have parables like this that remind us of our salvation and what we have in the kingdom. We need to be reminded of Who we serve and how wonderful this gift is that we have.

The Dragnet/ Fishing Net

In this parable Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet. I am not talking about that old TV show with Sergeant Joe Friday. A "dragnet" refers to a very large net used by commercial fishermen. Most biblical translations say either "net" or "large net," but some versions like the New American Standard actually use the term "dragnet." The net described in this parable is a net with weights attached to the bottom. Sometimes fishermen would actually work in tandem and stretch the net between two boats. They lowered the net into the water and dragged it toward the shore (thus the term "dragnet"). The net traps all the fish in the immediate vicinity. Once it is up on the beach the fishermen then separate the good edible fish, which they can market, from the fish or other things that have been caught in the net that are inedible or just need to be discarded. Here's the parable, v 47...

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So, it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47-50).

Q7, this parable indicates the coming WHAT that will take place in the kingdom of heaven. JUDGMENT. This is about judgment. By the way, this is the second of the kingdom of heaven parables that talk about judgment. He talked about it in the Wheat and the Tares earlier. All people will be gathered into God's dragnet and will be judged whether they are righteous

or wicked. Notice that it does not say they will be judged whether they are good or bad. This is an important theological point.

Becoming Righteous

How does a person become "righteous" in God's eyes? There is only one way. It is through the cross of Jesus Christ, through what HE did. Remember, we are all sinners, every one of us whether you want to admit it or not. We are all sinners. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It does not matter what good deeds we have done. None of that matters. Isaiah says that our good deeds, our so-called righteousness, are as "filthy rags" to a holy God (Isaiah 64:6 KJV). Those who are judged as righteous are judged that way only because they wear the garment of righteousness. They are "clothed with Christ" (Galatians 3:27 NASB) as Paul likes to put it whom they put on at the time by faith when they are saved. Job 29:14 says something along the same lines: "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban." Isaiah 61:10 says, "I will rejoice greatly in the LORD. My soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness..." When God looks at those of us who have been saved, what does He see? He sees HIS SON. Only because of Jesus and what He did does God judge us as being righteous. It was not anything that we did. It was not because we deserved it. That is an important theological point.

What is interesting to note in this parable is WHO is actively involved in the Judgment. It is not the church. It is not religious leaders. Q8 asks, in this parable what are the angels observed doing? Separating. They are the ones separating the people out, aren't they? Jesus is the Judge, BUT the angels are instruments of judgment that He uses.

This parable, by the way, is very similar to the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. It talked about the angels doing the same thing there in the coming judgment. This is what Jesus said earlier: "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin

and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace..." (Matthew 13:41-42). He says at the very end, "Pay attention!" "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:43). This is a warning. Jesus wants us to be aware. People everywhere would be well advised to heed Jesus's warning of judgment.

The Head of the Household

This is the last kingdom of heaven parable [in this chapter].

Have you ever been in a situation where someone you know says, "Hey, I have something I need to show you." Maybe it was something they just got that they think is really "cool." Something that maybe their grandfather gave them or just whatever it is... "I gotta show you this!" Maybe it is a new car. "Do you have time? Can you come with me and let me show it to you?" – "Oh yeah, yeah!" Have you ever had something like that happen to you (or something similar to that)? Well, that is what is happening in this parable...

"Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." And He said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven [you have some level of knowledge like the scribes] is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matthew 13:51-52).

Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, the master of a house. What does the master do in this parable? Q9 says that he brings out something for his guests to enjoy. WHAT is it? TREASURES. He brings out his treasures from his closet or the storehouse he has out back for his neighbors and friends to enjoy. "Look what I have!" He SHARES (at least visually) what he has with them. Whose possessions are these? Who do they belong to? To the head of the household, the master of the house, right? Who gets to enjoy them? Everybody that is in his house. Whoever is there. Some of the treasures he brings out, he has had in his possession for a long time. Some he has had for only a short

time. Maybe he just got it that same day. But to his guests, no matter how long he has had them, they are new to them.

The kingdom of heaven consists of many people like the scribes that are referred to in this parable – individuals who are knowledgeable about the word of God. People in the kingdom of heaven become disciples, not merely believers. So, what happens is [a person] becomes a new believer and they begin to study more and more about God, about this Jesus that they follow. They want to know more about Him. And then as they learn more and more, they pass that knowledge on to others. The goal of a disciple is to lead others to Christ and to help them to grow and ultimately to reach a greater level of spiritual maturity.

Did Jesus's Disciples Really Understand?

Q10, Jesus asks His disciples if they understand all the things that He has been saying. What was their reply? YES.

The follow-up question is Q11, do you think the disciples REALLY understood what Jesus was saying? Not really. They thought that they knew more than they did. They thought they understood. And so, they are giving Jesus the answer that they think He wants to hear. "Yes, we understand, Jesus!"

The disciples did not fully grasp who Jesus was until after His resurrection. And so it is with many of us. We may think that we know more than we actually do. I am guilty as charged! One of the great paradoxes of life -- the more I learn, the more I realize I don't know!

A growing Christian is one who is hungry to learn more. They have a strong yearning to be in God's word, to learn more and more and more and then apply it; not just having it for the sake of knowledge. They want to have it change their lives!

Closing Thoughts About the Kingdom of Heaven

So, what is the kingdom of heaven? Well. it is a lot of things. Part of it is the relationship that exists between God and those who place

themselves under His sovereign authority. God (our Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit) does not force any of us to follow Him. The choice to follow or not is ours to make. The rewards of being a part of the kingdom of heaven are greater than the rewards offered by this sin-ravished world. That is the message Augustine was conveying in his *Confessions*. There is an ongoing struggle between the enticing pleasure of the flesh and the pull of God on our hearts. There is this struggle, a tug-of-war. God wants a relationship with us, but unfortunately far too often we – even those of us who call ourselves Christians and really know that we are saved – are unwilling to let some things go. We are hanging on to them. We are guilty of that. The Christian journey includes some very real conflicts; struggles that we have between the things of this world and the things of the Lord. That is just a part of being in the world.

The last question, Q12, asks, at what point do YOU fully mature in your faith and learn everything there is to learn? When do you “arrive” spiritually? When? What age? *[Class responses included “tomorrow, the eternal tomorrow.” Even at 70-plus they said they had not learned it all; they are always learning. They will never learn it all. Our spiritual maturity is a lifelong process that we call “sanctification.”]*

Application

So, there you have the kingdom of heaven parables. We studied eight of them. There is a lot there to the kingdom of heaven. That is why a whole chapter is devoted to it. So, now we will get a few applications from the parables we looked at this morning...

The Hidden Treasure and Pearl of Great Value – God desires that we seek Him, His kingdom, and His righteousness. But even if we do NOT (that could be because of our own selfishness or rebellion or whatever reason), there is yet hope. We can still find Him because He extends grace toward us. I think about that story Jesus told of the shepherd who is searching for the lost sheep. Our Lord actively pursues us. He pursued us

and He drew us to Himself by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. He did that because He loves us.

The Dragnet/ The Fishing Net – There is coming a day of judgment, a day of reckoning. Those who have believed in Jesus Christ, been saved by faith, made Him the Lord of their life will receive their eternal reward. You have nothing to fear if you are truly saved. We have been saved because of His great mercy toward us. Jesus warns those who reject Him (today, right now, while you are still alive) that they are going to face eternal punishment if they continue on their present course. He has given us due warning, so we would do well to heed His warning! What a gracious God to warn us.

The Head of the Household – Among the treasures that our Master shares with those of us who know Him personally are the nuggets of truth found in His holy word. That is one of the reasons we come [to this class] to learn more. You want to be able to learn more of the great truths that are in His word. In addition, He lavishes many blessing on us. I like to say this -- “far beyond what I ever deserve.” These are ours to enjoy today, again, because of His love and grace.

The kingdom of heaven as seen corporately and personally in these parables. What a treasure!