



THE LIFE AND TIMES

of

JESUS OF NAZARETH

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Secrets of the Kingdom:
Parables That Both Confound and
Reveal

Matthew 13



We come to Matthew 13, one of the great teaching chapters in Matthew's Gospel and one of the most important chapters in Scripture for understanding how the kingdom of heaven advances in this present age.

Up to this point in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew has been showing us the King, the kingdom, and the rising rejection of the King. Jesus has preached with authority, healed with compassion, cast out demons by the Spirit of God, forgiven sins, confronted hypocrisy, and announced that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Yet the response has not been simple or uniform. Some believe, some marvel, some follow for a season. The religious leaders increasingly harden themselves against Him. Matthew 13, through the use of parables, helps explain why the kingdom does not arrive in the way many expected.





That phrase, *not in the way many expected*, is important.

Many expected the kingdom to come with political overthrow and visible political triumph. Instead, Jesus reveals that the kingdom comes first in a form that is real but somewhat hidden, advancing but contested until the harvest at the end of the age.

This is why Matthew 13 is not merely a collection of memorable religious stories. Jesus is revealing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and He is doing so through parables that open truth to humble hearers while concealing truth from those who have hardened themselves against Him.

This chapter answers questions that every serious Christian eventually asks.

If Jesus is King, why does His kingdom often appear small, opposed, and mixed? Why do some hear the Word of God and bear fruit, while others hear and quickly forget, respond emotionally and fade, or become entangled again in the anxieties and attractions of the world? Why does the visible church contain true believers and hypocrites? Why does gospel ministry sometimes seem slow and unimpressive? Why does God not immediately separate the righteous from the wicked?





Matthew 13 gives Jesus' answer to those questions and corrections to misperceptions about His kingdom. The kingdom of heaven has truly come, and Christ is King - but it has not yet appeared in its final visible fullness. The King has come, the Word is being sown, and the reign of God is already at work among us. But the harvest, final separation, and final public manifestation of the kingdom still await the end of the age.

One of the central issues running through the chapter is *hearing*. Not merely hearing words, and not just attending religious instruction, but receiving with spiritual understanding that generates repentance, faith, obedience, and fruit. Jesus will say, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*. That sentence is not just decorative. It is both an invitation ... and a warning. It calls us to examine whether the Word is passing over us, stirring us only temporarily, being choked by rival loves, or taking root in a heart prepared by grace.



Matthew 13 also helps us think rightly about ministry, evangelism, and discipleship. It keeps us from naive triumphalism, as though large crowds always mean God's blessing and spiritual health.

It also keeps us from despair, as though small beginnings or mixed responses mean the Word has failed. Jesus teaches us that the kingdom advances through the sowing of the Word - we are called to sow faithfully, not fret over how others respond.



Chapter 13 opens with the words, *On the same day*. That phrase matters because Matthew 13 follows directly from the rising conflict of Matthew 12. Jesus has healed, taught, confronted Sabbath distortions, and demonstrated authority over demons. Yet the religious leaders, rather than submitting to the evidence, accuse Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. That accusation is not a small misunderstanding. It is hard-hearted and offensive resistance to the light. They see the work of the Spirit and call it the work of Satan. Opposition to Jesus' teaching and ministry has reached a critical point of escalating danger.



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Beelzebul, sometimes spelled Beelzebub, carries the meaning “Lord of the Flies” or “Lord of the Prince.” The name comes from an ancient Philistine god once worshiped in the city of Ekron. In the Old Testament, King Ahaziah of Israel turned to this pagan deity for help instead of seeking the Lord. The prophet Elijah confronted this act as outright idolatry and rebellion against the God of Israel. Over time, the name of this foreign god was taken up in Jewish thought and used as a title for the chief ruler of demons, the head of the demonic realm.

In later centuries the name appeared in literature as a symbol of evil. William Golding’s novel *Lord of the Flies* uses it as a representation of the darkness and savagery that lies within human hearts when moral restraints are removed. In modern music, the name surfaces in Queen’s *Bohemian Rhapsody*, where it appears in a dramatic scene of judgment and damnation. Many read or sing these references without giving them serious thought.

Scripture offers no permission to treat the names or powers of darkness as entertainment, symbols, or harmless words. Do not listen to them. Do not make light of them. Do not allow fascination with evil (whether through music, stories, or casual speech) to dull your spiritual senses. The enemy seeks any opening to gain influence. Always stand under the authority and victory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has power over every demonic force.

This is the setting for the parables of Matthew 13. Jesus is not speaking into a neutral environment. He is speaking after a major display of unbelief. The crowds are large, but the responses are mixed. Some are curious - some superficial. Some are hostile. Others are growing as disciples. In that context, Jesus sits by the sea, great multitudes gather, He gets into a boat and teaches while the multitude stands on the shore.



Before we interpret the parables, we need to understand what a parable is. The Greek word is *parabolē*. At its most basic level, the word carries the idea of placing one thing beside another for comparison.

A parable places an earthly scene beside a spiritual reality so that the hearer is invited to see the deeper truth. They are used for comparison and illustration. The Hebrew background is the word *mashal*, which can refer to a proverb, comparison, wise saying, or illustrative story.





The Old Testament also uses this kind of teaching. Nathan confronted David through the story of the poor man's lamb. Isaiah preaches of a vineyard to expose Israel's guilt. Ezekiel and other prophets used parables to awaken conscience and reveal judgment. The wisdom literature teaches by regularly using parables.

So when Jesus used parables, He is not inventing an entirely unknown method of instruction. He is using a familiar form, but with His unique style - and divine authority.

They disclose the mysteries of God's truth to those who have been given ears to hear, and they leave the self-satisfied and hardened with only the outer shell of the story.

When we interpret parables, we should observe a few guardrails. We begin with Jesus' own explanations when they are provided. **Second**, we look for the main point of each parable rather than forcing every detail to carry unique meaning. Some details are interpreted for us, such as the seed, the soils, the field, the enemy, and the harvest. Other details simply support the story.

Third, we read the parables within their kingdom context. Jesus repeatedly says, *The kingdom of heaven is like*. He is teaching the present form and final outcome of God's saving reign in Christ.

Fourth, we interpret them with a high view of Scripture; these are not merely religious reflections. They are inspired revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifth, we let them examine us; parables are meant to land on the conscience. They do not ask only, "Do you understand the story?" They ask, "Are you rightly related to the King?"





Jesus begins with the *Parable of the Sower*. A sower goes out to sow. Some seed falls by the wayside, and the birds devour it. Some falls on stony places where there is little soil. It springs up quickly, but because it has no depth of earth, it withers when the sun rises. Some falls among thorns, and the thorns choke it.

But some falls on good ground and produces a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. Then Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”





This first parable is foundational because it teaches how the Word of the kingdom is received. Later in the chapter, Jesus tells us that the seed is the Word of the kingdom. The same seed is sown, yet the results are dramatically different. That means the problem is not in the seed; the Word is not weak, the gospel does not lack power. The difference is in the soil; which represents the hearer and the condition of each human heart.

This is relevant to preaching, personal witness, and discipleship. Jesus tells us ahead of time that the Word will meet with mixed responses. Some people will hear and reject it almost immediately. Some will respond with visible joy, but without root. Some will hear, but the cares of the age and the deceitfulness of riches will choke the Word.

This is not a failure of the Word. It is the reality of the Word being sown in a fallen world.

Others will hear with understanding and bear fruit with perseverance.





That truth protects us from two opposite errors. It protects us from despair when people do not respond as we hoped. Every faithful Christian who has ever witnessed to family or friend, taught a class, preached a sermon, or disciplined another person knows the pain of mixed responses.

Jesus tells us not to be surprised nor disappointed.

And it also protects us from manipulation. The parable does not teach that if we simply find the perfect and attractive method, everyone will be converted.

Different crop sizes also matter. Jesus says the good soil produces fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. These are not three different categories of salvation, as though some believers are barely saved while others are spiritually elite.

All three represent genuine fruitfulness. In the ancient agricultural setting, a thirtyfold harvest was good. Sixtyfold was abundant. And a hundredfold likely suggests an extraordinary harvest.





That point matters: not every believer bears fruit in the same visible measure. Some serve publicly; others labor quietly, teach, raise children faithfully, give generously, suffer patiently, or minister in hard places with little apparent result. Much of their fruit may be known only to God. Yet good soil always bears fruit, though in differing kinds and measures.

The phrase, *He who has ears to hear, let him hear*, is more than a call to pay attention. It echoes the Old Testament pattern in which Israel often heard but did not truly listen, they saw but did not perceive.

The prophets repeatedly confronted a people who were outwardly exposed to God's Word but inwardly resistant to it. The prophets regularly spoke of people who hear words but do not respond with faith and obedience.

Jesus takes up that prophetic method. He is saying, in effect, "Do not let these words merely pass across your ears; hear with the heart, respond with repentance and faith that result in obedience.

Hear and obey in such a way that bears fruit.





After the first parable, the disciples ask the question that naturally arises: “Why do You speak to them in parables?” Many people assume the answer is simple: Jesus used parables because stories make truth easier for everyone to understand.

That is true, because parables are vivid and memorable. But Matthew 13 does not present that as the full answer. Jesus says, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”





That answer is startling. Jesus does not say merely, “I speak in parables because stories are helpful.” He says that the disciples have been given knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom, while others have not. The language is the language of providence and grace.

Spiritual understanding is not finally a human achievement - it is a gift. We are responsible to hear, repent, believe, and grow in grace.

But unless God opens the heart, the truth remains spiritually unseen.

The word *mystery* in the New Testament does not mean a story with a hidden or surprising ending. It refers to a truth in God's redemptive plan that was once only partially revealed but has now been brought more fully into the light.

In Matthew 13, the *mystery* concerns the arrival and present form of the kingdom. The Old Testament promised the reign of the coming Messiah, judgment upon evil, restoration, righteousness, and the nations brought under His authority and blessing.

Many therefore expected the kingdom to arrive at once in visible political triumph, with Rome overthrown, Israel vindicated, and Messiah openly reigning.





Jesus reveals that the kingdom has indeed come, but not in the form many expected. The King comes, but He is rejected. The Word is sown, but responses are mixed. The kingdom is real, but it begins small and grows quietly. Wheat and tares grow together until the harvest. Treasure of infinite worth lies hidden from those who do not recognize its value. Judgment is certain, but delayed until the end of the age.

The kingdom is truly inaugurated in Christ's saving reign, but it is not yet fully consummated until He returns.

The King has come, the Word is being sown, and the kingdom is truly expanding; but the final harvest, separation, and public manifestation of the kingdom still await the end of the age.

This is the *already* and the *not yet* of the kingdom.

The kingdom is *already* present because the King has come. Jesus announces that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He casts out demons, forgives sins, heals the sick, calls disciples, teaches with divine authority, and inaugurates the saving reign of God. Wherever Christ reigns by His Word and Spirit, wherever sinners repent and believe, wherever hearts are changed and obedience is formed, the kingdom is truly present.

Yet the kingdom is *not yet* complete. Sin and death still remain. Satan still deceives. The righteous still suffer and the wicked may still appear to prosper. Hypocrisy remains in the visible community of the Church. The final harvest and judgement have not yet come.





That raises the question: whose kingdom rules the earth right now?

God rules absolutely over all things by sovereign providence. The earth is the Lord's. There is no territory outside His authority.

Yet Scripture also speaks of Satan as the ruler of this world in a usurped, temporary, and defeated sense. He blinds minds, snatches away the Word, sows counterfeit truth, deceives through riches, and opposes the work of Christ.

Satan is not sovereign. He is not equal to God. He is a creature and a rebel and an accuser.

But his influence in this present evil age is real.

How does the Church fit into all this?

The church is not identical to the kingdom in its fullest sense, but it is inseparably related to it.

The kingdom is *God's saving reign in Christ*. The Church is *the people visibly gathered by that reign* throughout history. The visible Church is the embassy and witness of the kingdom, the appointed sphere where the Word is preached, the ordinances are administered, disciples are formed, worship is offered, and the people of God are strengthened.





But the visible Church remains mixed in this age.

There are true believers and false professors. There is wheat and there are tares. God alone perfectly knows those who are His. The invisible Church, the whole number of all who are truly united to Christ by faith, is known only by God.

The visible Church is what we see outwardly in profession, baptism, membership, weekly gathering.

God sees those who are truly part of His kingdom.

This distinction steadies us and keeps us from fretting when we see challenges in the Church. It also keeps us from idolizing the visible Church, as though attendance or institutional strength automatically prove spiritual life.

The churches with several campuses and thousands who attend is no more effective in the kingdom (and in many cases less so) than the faithful pastor of a few hundred, even a couple of dozen, tucked away in East Africa, Pakistan, India, or Bangladesh!



Jesus now returns to His first parable and explains the Parable of the Sower.

The wayside hearer hears the Word of the kingdom and does not understand it. The wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown. This is the hard heart; the Word lands, but it does not penetrate. The person may be proud, indifferent, or openly resistant. Satan is active, not because he is sovereign over the heart, but because he exploits hardness. He does not want the Word to remain, be pondered, be believed, and bear fruit - he snatches it away.

This should make us pray whenever the Word is taught. We are not merely transferring information. We are engaged in spiritual conflict. A sermon, evangelistic conversation, or family devotion may look ordinary, but there is more taking place than meets the eye. The Word is being sown, and the evil one would gladly snatch it away before it is understood and received by the hearers.





The stony ground hearer receives the Word immediately with joy, but it has no root. At first, everything appears promising. There may be enthusiasm and the right religious language.

But when tribulation or persecution arises, he stumbles. *Tribulation* carries the idea of pressure, affliction, distress, or trouble. *Persecution* refers to being pursued, harassed, or opposed because of allegiance to Christ.

Jesus is not speaking merely of ordinary inconvenience. He is speaking of the pressure that comes because of His Word.

Immediate joy is not the same as saving faith. Emotional response is not the same as regeneration. A person may be moved by Christian teaching, upbeat Christian music, and a warm atmosphere - yet have no root.

This is one of the dangers in so-called *attractional* churches. When churches are designed primarily for numerical growth, a moving experience, and an easy sense of belonging - they may unintentionally encourage stony-ground responses.

People can be inspired, comforted, and socially connected without ever being converted and discipled in Christ. That does not mean every large church is shallow, nor that every emotional response is false. But it does mean that faithful ministry must never confuse visible enthusiasm with spiritual life. The stony-ground hearer does not fall away because the gospel lacked power. He falls away because the Word never took deep root.

When Christianity becomes costly, the shallow nature of the response is exposed.





The thorny ground hearer hears the Word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke it, and he becomes unfruitful. The thorny heart may not look openly rebellious - it may look respectable, even a bit religious. The person hears the Word, but the Word is crowded out.

The cares of this world include responsibilities, ambitions, pressures, and preoccupations tied to this present age. Some of these matters are not sinful in themselves. Work, family, health, finances, and planning are real responsibilities. But even legitimate responsibilities can become spiritually suffocating when they become one's only focus.

Riches deceive because they promise what only God can give. They promise security and significance. They promise freedom, but often enslave. The word translated deceitfulness carries the idea of delusion or seduction. They say, "You can rest in what you possess." If believed, they choke (pressed in and suffocated by surrounding forces) out the Word.

Then comes the good ground.

This hearer receives the Word, understands it, and bears fruit. Luke's parallel adds that the good soil hears the Word, holds it fast, and bears fruit with patience.

The emphasis is not merely on an initial response but on a life of persevering faith. Matthew 13 is therefore not only about conversion at the beginning of the Christian life, but about discipleship, endurance, and fruit that remains.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Yet the faith that receives Christ is never fruitless. When God gives new life, there will be evidence of that new life.





Jesus' repeated phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like," continues to guide and control our interpretation. These parables are important because Jesus is doing exactly what He says: telling us what the kingdom is *like*.

He is not giving optional religious illustrations. He is revealing the form of the kingdom in a way that corrects our assumptions. We tend to expect the kingdom to appear as immediate purification, and quick separation of the righteous and wicked.

Others expected the kingdom to be immediate political dominance and a society that they envisioned. Jesus presents a different reality, in this age, the kingdom advances in a field where good and evil grow together until the harvest.

Jesus next gives the Parable of the *Wheat and the Tares*. The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. When the grain sprouted and produced a crop, the tares also appeared.

The servants asked if they should gather the tares, but the owner said no, because in gathering them they might uproot the wheat also. Both must grow together until the harvest. At harvest, the tares will be gathered and burned, and the wheat gathered into the barn.

The tares are likely darnel, a weed that closely resembles wheat in its early stages. Darnel (wheat's evil twin) could look so much like wheat early on that premature separation would be dangerous.

That helps explain why the servants are told not to pull them up immediately. Darnel is not merely different from wheat; it is deceptively similar for a time.

Not everything that looks like wheat, at first, is wheat. That makes it a fitting image for counterfeit profession.





Jesus explains the parable. The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age. The reapers are angels.

At the end of the age, 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. They will be cast into the furnace of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Jesus' identification of Himself as *the Son of Man* is not incidental. The One telling the parable is also the One who sows, judges, sends the angels who gather at the end of the age.

This does not mean the Church should neglect discipline or doctrinal vigilance. Matthew 18 gives the pattern for confronting a sinning brother and, if necessary, bringing the matter before the Church.

First Corinthians 5 commands the Church not to tolerate open, scandalous immorality, but to remove the unrepentant person for the purity of the body.

Titus requires elders to hold fast the faithful Word, exhort in sound doctrine, and rebuke those who contradict it, especially those who spread destructive teaching.





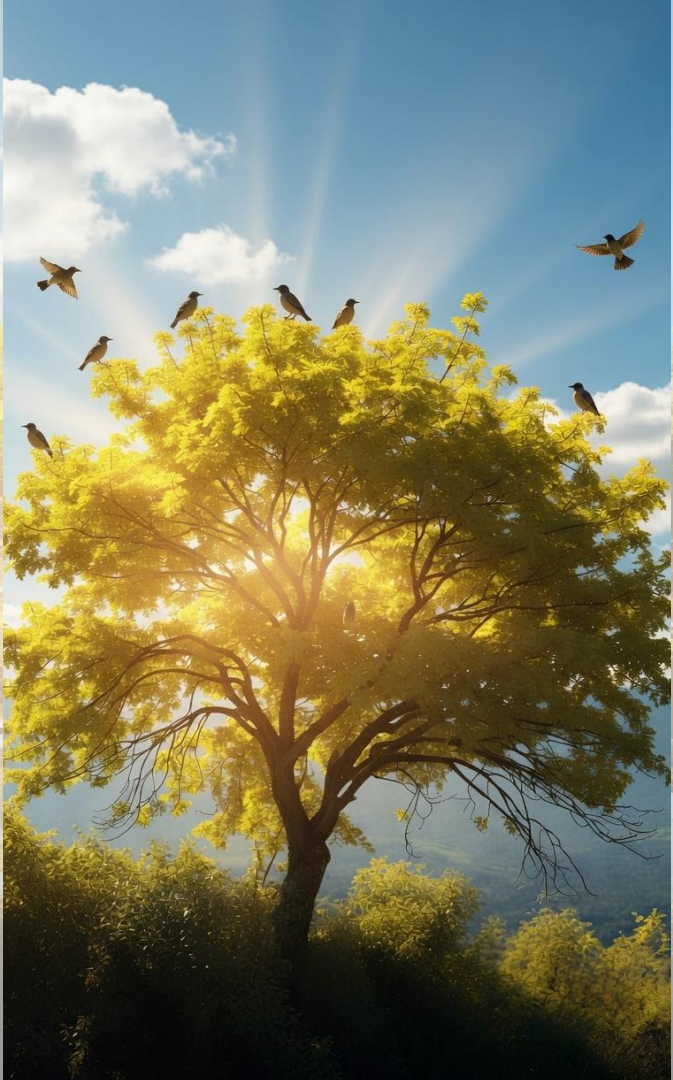
So the Church must not knowingly tolerate open wickedness or destructive teaching. But Matthew 13 warns us against assuming the role of final judge against those who are lukewarm; human beings are not to execute judgment as God will at the end of history. We may and should judge doctrine and conduct for the health of the Church.

But we may not claim omniscience nor authority over the final state of every soul. That judgment, and the final harvest, belongs to God.

And the judgment language must not be softened; although we often desire to do so. Jesus speaks of the fires of judgement. And we should speak of such things with tears, not with theatrical harshness.

The same passage also gives profound hope: “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” The righteous may be hidden, afflicted, or unimpressive now. They will be publicly vindicated then.

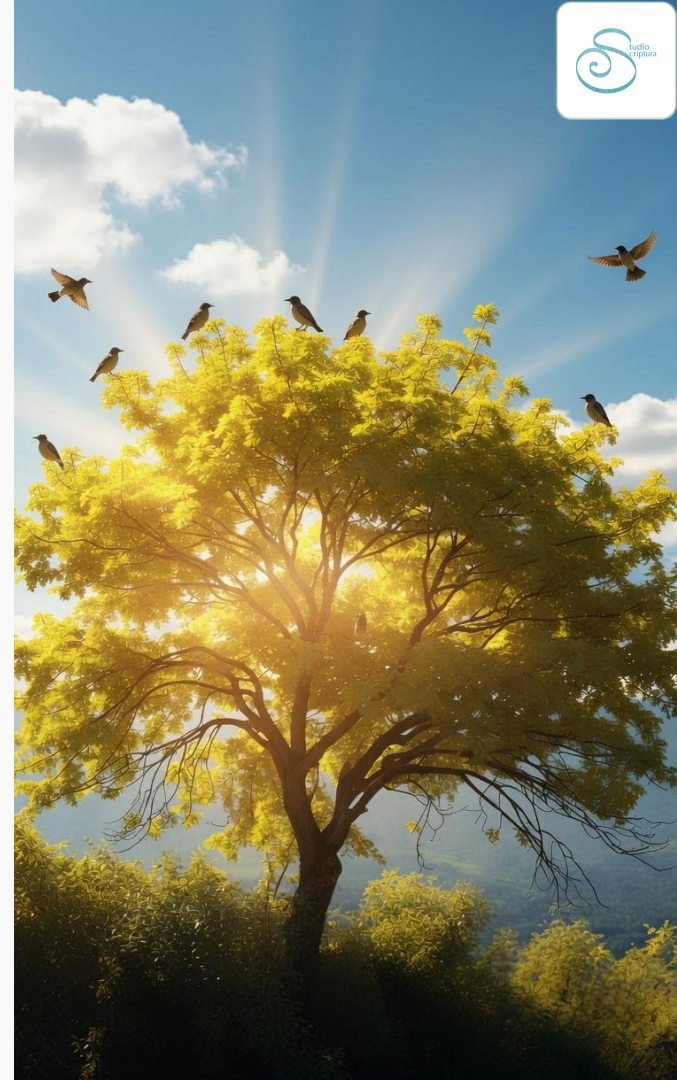






Jesus then gives the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the least of all the seeds, but when it grows it becomes greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

This parable raises a common question: technically, the mustard seed is not the smallest seed in all botanical science. There are smaller seeds. But Jesus is not giving a technical botany lecture. He is speaking proverbially and broadly agriculturally to His hearers. In the ordinary experience of His audience, the mustard seed was known as the tiniest seed they knew.

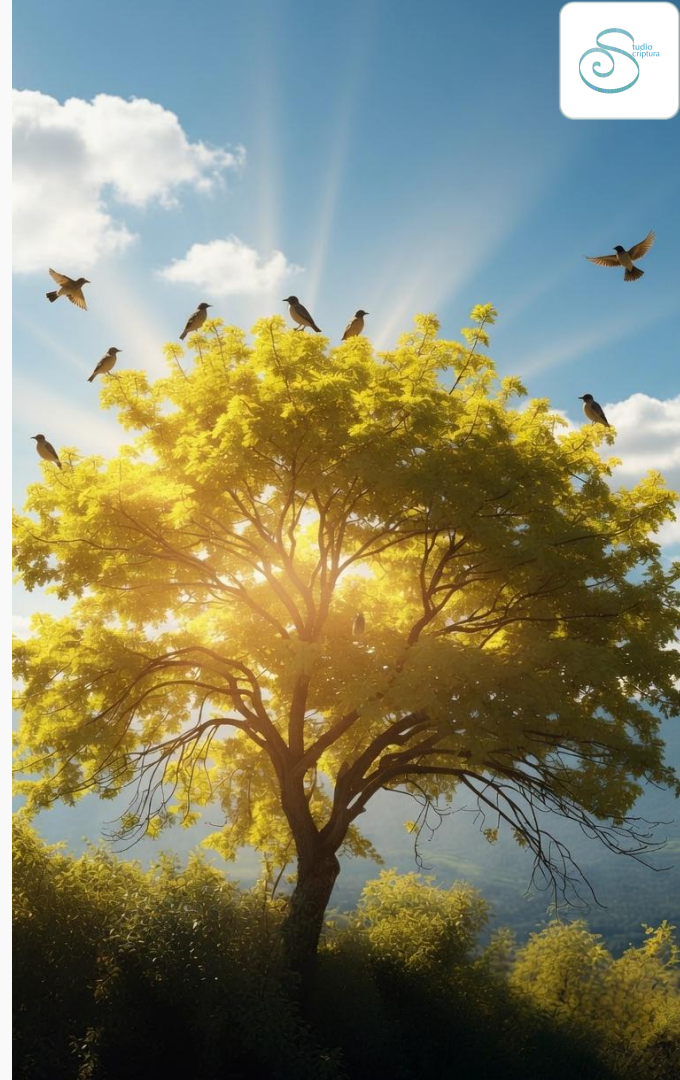




If you're picturing the mustard fields we commonly see today, you might wonder how birds could possibly nest in them! Jesus was actually talking about a different variety, black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) used in first-century Israel. It shot up ten feet tall with thick, woody stalks, perfectly illustrating a tiny beginning with a surprisingly large outcome.

The point is context, and the contrast between an unimpressive beginning and a surprisingly large outcome.

We often dismiss small things because we measure significance by size and immediate visibility. A small Bible class, a small church, one child taught how to memorize a verse of Scripture, one believer quietly persevering in prayer may appear unimpressive.





But the kingdom is not measured by worldly results at the moment of sowing. God delights to take what appears small and make it fruitful in ways we cannot yet see; often when we are no longer here.



Jesus then says the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid/mixed in three measures of meal until it was all leavened. This parable is closely paired with the Mustard Seed. The Mustard Seed emphasizes outward growth from small beginning to large outcome. The Leaven emphasizes quiet yet pervasive influence until the whole is affected.





Leaven often has negative associations in Scripture. Jesus warns against the leaven of the Pharisees. Paul uses leaven as an image of corrupting influence. During Passover, leaven was removed from the house.

For these reasons, some interpreters read the leaven in this parable negatively, as a picture of corrupting influence spreading through the visible sphere of the kingdom, somewhat parallel to the tares among the wheat. That reading is understandable because of the negative associations leaven has elsewhere in Scripture.





Yet in this context, where the Leaven is paired with the Mustard Seed, the better reading seems to be that Jesus is describing the kingdom's pervasive positive work.

The point is not that leaven is always positive, but that the kingdom works in a hidden yet effective way until the whole is impacted.

Symbols do not have exactly the same meaning in every biblical context. A lion can represent Christ, and a lion can represent Satan. Seed can represent the Word in one parable and sons of the kingdom in another. Birds can represent the wicked one in one setting and nesting creatures in another.

Context governs meaning.





The reference to three measures of meal also deserves attention. Three measures was a large amount of flour, enough for a substantial quantity of bread. Some have seen an echo of Genesis 18, where Abraham tells Sarah to prepare three measures of fine meal for the heavenly visitors.

Whether that echo is intended or not, the setting emphasizes the presence of God and the quantity emphasizes abundance. A small amount of leaven works through a large amount of dough.

“Go ye into all the world!”

That is often how the kingdom works. It works in the heart before it appears in habits. It works in homes before it spreads in communities. It works through teaching, repentance, and discipleship. It begins small and maybe unseen, but it is not weak.

The Spirit of God does not need constant spectacle to produce real transformation.





Matthew then tells us that Jesus spoke these things in parables to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.” Matthew 13:35. The Old Testament text Jesus is quoting is Psalm 78:2: “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.”

Psalm 78 is a teaching psalm of Asaph. It recounts Israel’s history, including God’s mighty works, Israel’s repeated unbelief, God’s judgment, and God’s ongoing mercy and covenant faithfulness.

The Psalm begins by calling the people to listen. Asaph says he will open his mouth in a parable and utter dark sayings of old, things heard and known from the fathers, so that the next generation will not fail due to unbelief, but set its hope in God and not forget His works.



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Asaph was a Levite appointed during the time of David to help lead Israel's worship. He was not merely a musician, though music was central to his calling. He was also a theological teacher, and Scripture even calls him "Asaph the seer" in 2 Chronicles 29:30. First Chronicles 25:1 connects Asaph and his sons with prophetic ministry through music, saying they "should prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals." The psalms associated with Asaph often interpret Israel's history in light of God's covenant faithfulness, Israel's unbelief, divine judgment, and eventual mercy. So when Jesus connects His parables to Psalm 78, He is drawing from a deep worship and teaching tradition that calls God's people to remember His covenant promises, teach the next generation, and discern the meaning of events and history under the authority of God's providence.



This Old Testament background is important; Psalm 78 is not merely a set of moral stories; it is redemptive history interpreted for the covenant community. It exposes the repeated pattern of grace received and grace resisted. It teaches future generations not to repeat the unbelief of their fathers.

Like Asaph in Psalm 78, Jesus opens His mouth in parables. But Jesus is greater than Asaph, the author of that Psalm. He does not merely retell Israel's past; He reveals the hidden purposes of God now coming to fulfillment in Himself and the kingdom He is bringing.

The “things kept secret from the foundation of the world” are not random secrets. They are the truths concerning God's covenantal love and the unfolding kingdom, and the kingdom's mixed reception, its hidden growth, and final judgment.

This Old Testament background matters because Matthew is not merely pointing to a stray line in a Psalm. He is showing that Jesus' teaching stands in the stream of Psalm 78's covenantal warning.

The Scribes, Pharisees, serious students of Scripture, would have known the Psalm and that it rehearses Israel's history: God spoke, delivered, provided, and showed mercy. Yet Israel forgot His works, resisted His Word, and hardened itself against Him. Psalm 78:22 says, "Because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation." Later, Psalm 78:59 says, "When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel."

This is not light language. It is covenant warning.





That warning now falls upon the generation to which Jesus is presenting these parables. They have seen greater works in Jesus than their fathers saw. They have heard the King Himself and have watched Him heal, teach, cast out demons, forgive sins, and announce the kingdom. Yet many are resisting the message and rejecting the Messenger.

Psalm 78 had warned the children not to repeat the unbelief of their fathers. Now the children of Jesus' generation are doing exactly that.

Many expected the kingdom to arrive in visible triumph, national vindication, and political deliverance - they imagined something more like a Maccabean victory. But Jesus reveals something very different: a kingdom sown through the Word, received by faith, hidden in growth, mixed results until harvest, and opened to the nations.

Psalm 78 also shows God's sovereign freedom. He passed over Joseph and Ephraim and chose Judah, the fourth son of Jacob.

In the story of David, He passed over David's elder brothers and chose the shepherd boy from the fields.

So now, in Jesus' day, that current generation of unbelieving Israel is being passed over, while the kingdom opens outward to all who receive the King by faith, including the Gentiles. God is not abandoning His promises; He is fulfilling Word in Christ.





Jesus now returns to His parables and says the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. This parable emphasizes the surpassing value of the kingdom and the joyful reordering of life and its priorities that follows true discovery of fellowship with Christ.

In the ancient world, people sometimes hid valuables in the ground because there were no modern banks or secure financial systems. Exile or death could leave treasure buried and forgotten. Jesus' hearers would understand the scene. A man finds treasure in a field. Recognizing its value, he hides it again, sells all he has, and buys the field.





The point is not to teach questionable business ethics. Nor is the point that salvation can be purchased by human works. This is not a parable about buying salvation.

It is a parable about discipleship in the Kingdom. Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone; but the disciple who has truly seen the worth of Christ no longer treats Him as one treasure among many. The selling of all is not the purchase price of salvation. It is the joyful disinvesting from old priorities and reordering of life when one has committed his life to Christ and His kingdom.

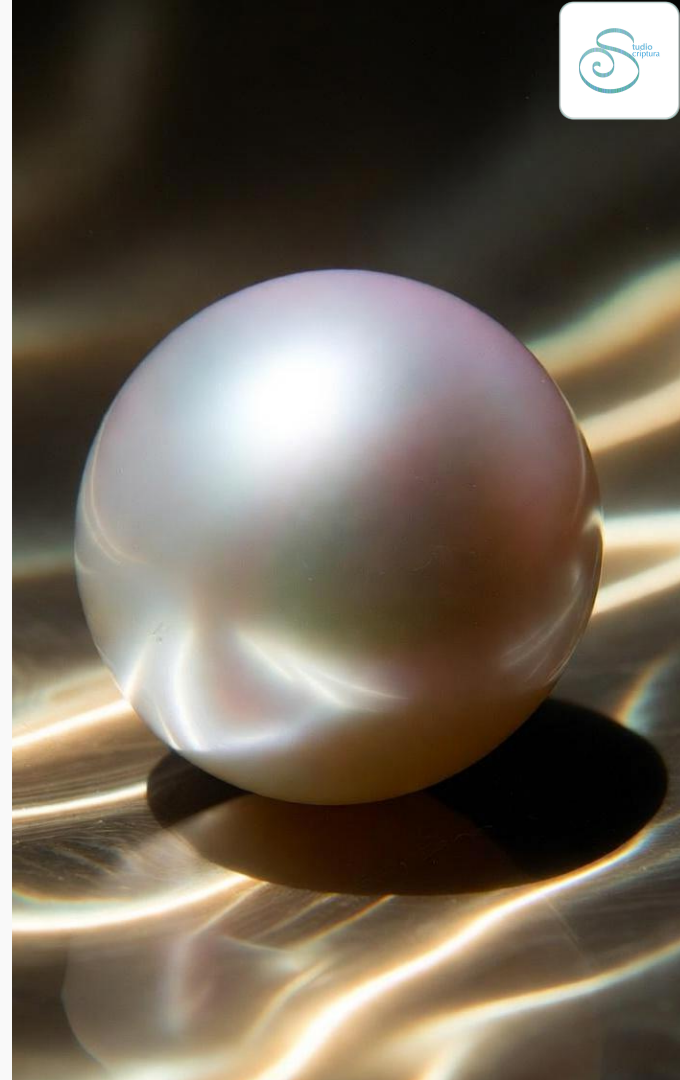
The heart that sees Christ rightly does not ask, "How little can I give and still be safe?" It asks, "How could I cling to anything now that I know the surpassing worth of Christ?"



Jesus gives another parallel parable: the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he found one *pearl of great price*, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl are similar, but they approach the matter from slightly different angles. In the Hidden Treasure, the man appears to find the treasure unexpectedly. In the parable of the Pearl, the merchant is searching; he knows pearls. He has been looking, and then he finds one pearl of surpassing worth.

Some people come to Christ after long searching. They have wrestled with truth, explored world religions and philosophies, desired beauty, but have seen the emptiness of the world. Whether one stumbles upon the treasure in a field or searches like a merchant, the response is the same. Everything in life is revalued and reoriented because of Jesus!





The merchant does not add the pearl to his collection as one more treasure among many. He sells all to have the one pearl. So it is with Christ; He is not one value among several, not one more way among many to God, and not the mascot of a modern self-help gospel.

When the merchant sees the pearl, he does not negotiate or find a way to fit it into his portfolio. He gives up everything because he has found what surpasses everything.

For some, that surrender takes the form of mission. For others, it might mean teaching, hospitality, faithful secular work and generous giving, raising children and grandchildren in the Lord.

The form may differ, but for every disciple it means something, because Christ now means everything.



Jesus then gives the Parable of the Dragnet.

The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind. When it is full, the fishermen draw it to shore, collect the good fish into vessels, and throw the bad away. Jesus explains that so it will be at the end of the age: the angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This parable returns to the theme of mixture followed by final separation. A dragnet swept broadly through the water, gathering all kinds of fish; the sorting came only afterward, on the shore. So it is with the kingdom in this age. The gospel is preached, churches gather, and people respond.

Some are genuine; others are not.



After these parables, Jesus asks, “Have you understood all these things?” The disciples answer, “Yes, Lord.” Then He says, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”

This is a beautiful statement about faithful Christian teaching. The *old* refers to the revelation already given in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. The *new* refers to what is revealed and fulfilled in Christ. A faithful teacher does not discard the old because the new has come. Nor does he cling to the old as though Christ has not fulfilled it. He brings out both. He reads Scripture with continuity and fulfillment.

Matthew 13 itself does this: it gives new kingdom revelation while standing on Isaiah 6 and Psalm 78. Jesus is not abandoning the Old Testament. He is unveiling its fulfillment.





Many expected a kingdom that provided immediate political deliverance, release from Roman authority, and visible restoration in Jerusalem. But Jesus teaches that His kingdom comes through the sowing of the Word, hearts that truly hear and receive, small beginnings, hidden growth, mixed fields, and a final harvest (and judgement) still to come.

We often measure kingdom progress by numbers, visibility, cultural strength, and momentum. Jesus teaches us to ask better questions. Is the Word being sown? Is there true hearing? Is Christ being treasured above all? Is there fruit with perseverance and growth? Are we willing to wait for the harvest?

A small work is not a failed work. A mixed field is not proof that the enemy has won. And a large crowd is not necessarily a fruitful field. Visible religious energy can still contain wheat and tares.

So Matthew 13 calls us to self-examination and faithful sowing.

What kind of hearer am I? Is the Word taking root? Is there fruit with patience?

Because the Word is powerful, we keep sowing. Sow when the soil seems hard. Sow when the results seem small. Sow when others walk away. Sow because Christ is King, the harvest is certain, and faithful gospel labor is never wasted.



This class was prepared through personal study of Scripture and careful engagement with trusted Bible scholarship. Generative AI tools were used to assist with research, organization, and the drafting of phrasing. All final interpretations, judgments, and content reflect the author's convictions.