

## Matthew 13D

- Have you heard the old saying, “drinking from a firehose”?
  - How many feel like that’s you over the past couple of weeks?
    - We’ve run through about 2/3 of Chapter 13 in a couple of weeks covering 4 of the seven Kingdom parables in this chapter
    - It’s been a lot of information, and perhaps you’re still struggling to make sense of it all
    - If so, you’re not alone, because I’m sure the disciples felt much the same
    - And remember, they had far less than 2 weeks to digest all this... they had barely 2 hours
  - Jesus lays out these difficult concepts hidden in coded language in a short time, so it probably felt like that first day in a college class
    - It was like drinking from a firehose for them too, but Jesus patiently gave them explanations when they needed it
    - So it’s only fair that I take a moment to do the same for us
  - So let’s do a brief review of what we’ve learned so far by recapping the interpretation of the first four parables we’ve studied in this chapter
    - The four parables were the Sower & the Seed, the Wheat & the Tares, the Mustard Seed and Leaven & Dough
    - The four parables all teach us something about the Kingdom Program, which is the way the Kingdom will exist during the Church Age
    - Jesus is introducing how the concept of the Kingdom changes from a proposal to a program now that Israel has rejected Him
- To begin, we have the Sower & the Seed parable to open the chapter
  - First Jesus gave the parable and later He explained it in detail
    - The parable described how the Kingdom Program will be received by hearts in the world

- And there are four possible responses to hearing the word of God calling us to place faith in Jesus Christ
  - First some hearts will be closed to the message and reject it right away
  - Other hearts will seem to receive it at first, but their interest will be short-lived
    - When that commitment to following Christ is tested in any way, they fall away having no root
  - Some hearts will respond genuinely in faith, and new spiritual life will take root
    - But then the worries and riches and pleasures of this life will choke off any fruit in their spiritual life
  - Finally, some hearts will hear and believe the word, and they will set their hearts on producing a great crop for Jesus
- To arrive at His four conditions, Jesus crossed two variables: inward reality vs. outward appearance forming a [Latin square](#)
  - Conditions 1 and 2 are both inwardly dead, while in Conditions 3 & 4 both are spiritually alive; they are born again by faith
    - That detail was pictured in the parable by whether the plant lived or died in each condition (2 died, 2 lived)
    - Then for each pair, one appears outwardly alive while the other appears dead
    - Conditions 2 & 3 had appearances that didn't match their inward reality
    - While Conditions 1 & 4 had outward appearances that matched their inward reality
  - All this is interesting, but according to Luke's Gospel, Jesus was primarily concerned with only one of these conditions:
    - Jesus warns the unfruitful Christian, Condition 3 Christian I call it
    - Don't take that light that the Lord placed in your heart and hide it under a blanket
    - Shine your light before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven

- That leads us to the Wheat & Tares, where Jesus explains the spiritual war that will rage during this age leading some Christians to be unfruitful
  - And in this parable Jesus explains that the Kingdom Program will be resisted by an enemy that wants to limit the Church's reach
    - During the Kingdom Program, there will be two kinds of people in the world
    - One group are those who hear and receive the Gospel; these are the wheat, Christ's followers
    - The other group are the unbelievers in the world; those who have not accepted the truth
  - And one group will oppose the other, as directed by our enemy whose unseen hand is manipulating the unbelieving world to do his bidding
    - The enemy sows "tares" around each of us, bringing unbelievers into our circle hoping to steal away our time, money, strength and desire to serve Christ
    - And so the enemy chokes off the production of spiritual fruit among at least some believers
- But lest we worry that the enemy might stop the Kingdom Program, the Lord gave us the parable of the Mustard Seed
  - The Mustard Seed parable reassured us that Satan's schemes won't work
    - No matter what the enemy may do to choke off individuals in the body, he can't hold back the growth of the church overall
    - Regardless of how many Condition 3 Christians there are, the Kingdom Program will eventually reach the world as the Lord appoints
    - Ultimately, the Kingdom will fill the world as it becomes a literal, physical Kingdom at Christ's return
  - Finally, we have the Leaven & Dough parable which brings us back to the main point
    - Our goal and responsibility as Christians is to be like leaven in dough
    - Like yeast hidden in dough...believers can't be seen except by the effect we have in the world

- We are invisible in the world unless we reproduce, but if we do, we can have a great effect propelling the church outward
- So we leave the big things to Christ...we don't try to figure out other people's hearts
  - We aren't supposed to devise ways to defeat the enemy, we aren't supposed to isolate ourselves from the world
  - The Lord decides where the seed falls, it's His word that changes hearts, and He knows who belongs to Him
  - He has the battle plan for the enemy, and He assures us His Church will prevail against the gates of Hell
  - He only asks us to do one thing...produce spiritual fruit so that we might be part of His Kingdom Program
- Let's summarize the four parables with four statements:
  - Sower & Seed...
    - The Kingdom Program builds a spiritual community of new hearts by the spreading of the word of God
    - Christ's followers are to serve the Kingdom Program by producing fruit
  - Wheat & Tares...
    - Our Kingdom work will be opposed in the world by an enemy seeking to choke off believers' fruit
    - We will endure until the end when Jesus separates the groups
  - Mustard Seed...
    - Despite the enemy's efforts, the Church grows to reach the world
    - He cannot stop God, but the enemy will find "nests" within the Church where he gains a foothold
  - Yeast & Dough...
    - We are hidden in the world, small and insignificant, but as we produce fruit we help propel the Church outward
    - Our responsibility to the Kingdom Program is to bear fruit

- Spiritual fruit – good works in service to Christ – is the way the church is supposed to serve the Kingdom Program to reach the world
  - To put it another way, our primary tool of evangelism is our obedience to God's word
    - The best way to reach the lost is to pursue your own sanctification
    - Or as the old saying goes...preach the Gospel everywhere you go, and when necessary use words
  - So it's not (just) what we say that moves the church forward, it's who we become in Christ
    - And that makes perfect sense
    - When someone brings us a new message, something they want us to consider, something that requires our agreement, we always evaluate the messenger, don't we?
    - If someone wants to sell you on a new fitness or weight loss program, don't you consider how fit the salesperson is?
    - If someone says they can be your financial advisor, but they're in bankruptcy, don't we look elsewhere for financial advice?
  - The same principle is at work in the Kingdom Program
    - If we are a Condition 3 Christian, what product are we "selling" to the rest of the world?
    - As far as they can tell, we look exactly like them...and if so, what kind of change are we advocating?
    - "Come to faith in Christ and stay exactly the same...only with fire insurance?" That's not a very compelling offer
- If you want to participate in the Kingdom Program, set your heart on becoming Christ-like by yielding to the Spirit as He teaches and convicts you
  - This isn't to say that Christians must be perfect or sinless before we can be useful to building the Kingdom...of course not
    - The issue raised in these parables wasn't perfection...it was production

- Are you producing spiritual fruit at some level...are you living out your faith in a genuine way?
  - Are you shining your light before men so that they might see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven?
- Are you learning the word of God, letting it change you from the inside out, living it out even as you speak it to others?
  - Or are we saying one thing while living another way? Are we hearers of the word and not doers?
  - By the spiritual fruit in your life, you become a witness to the truth of the Gospel, which the Lord uses to yield a crop one hundred fold
- The key here is not allowing the enemy to distract us from our mission by tempting us or frightening us with things in this world, his world
  - Yes, we all have to make a home, earn a living, raise our kids, binge watch a Netflix series...all important things
  - But those things are not the measure of our lives nor are they fulfillment of Christ's purpose in saving us
- Remember, a farmer plants a crop so that it might produce a return
  - A tall, healthy green plant that doesn't bear fruit is completely useless to the farmer
  - So our obligation to Christ is to make our lives a living sacrifice, placing His priorities above our own so that we might produce a crop
- But let's be honest, the temptation to put other priorities ahead of participating in the Kingdom Program is real, and the Lord knew we will be tempted
  - And because the Lord loves us and wants to motivate us to do the right thing, He has provided a way for us to resist the enemy's temptations
    - Which leads us into the final sequence of three Kingdom parables

**Matt. 13:44** "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

- This parable and the one that follows have often perplexed interpreters because they involve transactions
  - They speak of obtaining things of value through some kind of work
    - That detail suggests that the Kingdom comes to us by human works or some transaction between us and God
    - Of course that isn't what Jesus is saying, since the Bible makes abundantly clear that we gain salvation only by faith in Jesus
    - So what detail of the Kingdom is Jesus trying to describe here?
  - Taking a look at the parable...a man finds the treasure, Jesus says
    - In this parable the man wasn't looking for treasure
    - Whatever reason he had for digging in the field, it wasn't because he thought there was a treasure there
  - And we know this because Jesus says he "found" the treasure, which implies it was unexpected
    - And in fact, when he discovers it, he's so surprised that he's filled with joy over it
    - So the parable is picturing some kind of treasure that people don't even know exists until they discover it
- Then the parable takes an unexpected turn, as Jesus says this man then reburies the treasure and goes away to earn enough to buy the field
  - The man obviously doesn't own the land, which explains why he reburies it and leaves
    - Presumably, he was a farm laborer working in another man's field on that particular day
    - As he goes about his work on that day, he discovers this buried treasure, but the treasure doesn't belong to him
  - So naturally, he reburies it to hide his discovery
    - And if he left the treasure exposed, the current land owner might discover it too and then claim it as his rightful property

- But if the laborer reburies the treasure, he's done nothing wrong...he's left everything exactly as it was before
- But the man has learned something that now changes the entire trajectory of his life
  - One minute he's just a day laborer working to earn a minuscule wage
  - Now he's a man with great riches...but those riches are not yet his to enjoy
- He first must go away and earn them
  - Jesus says the man goes away to earn enough money to return and buy the land
  - Once he buys the land, then the treasure will also become his to enjoy without dispute
- Now what aspect of the Kingdom Program is Jesus describing?
  - There are some answers we can rule out quickly
    - For example, we know the treasure can't represent our salvation or Heaven because salvation cannot be purchased or earned
      - The Bible is very clear that salvation is only obtainable by placing faith in Jesus as our sacrifice...no work brings anyone into Heaven
    - Furthermore, the treasure can't be the Gospel message itself
      - Because we are not called to bury or hide the Gospel message after we discover it
      - That would be exactly the opposite to the Kingdom Program
  - So the treasure must represent some other aspect of the Kingdom Program
    - It's something we can discover now yet it must remain hidden until we have earned it
    - It's something a believer can discover in the field of the world, something that once we discover it, it changes the course of our lives

- But it's something we may obtain only after great sacrifice
  - Notice the man in the parable had to sell all that he owned in order to obtain the treasure
  - So the value of this treasure is so great that nothing we already possess is equal to this hidden treasure
- So what feature of the Kingdom matches this description?
  - What kind of treasure awaits us in the future? One we cannot possess now, one we earn, one that's worth sacrificing everything to obtain?
    - Well consider these statements in the NT:

[Luke 12:33](#) "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

[Luke 12:34](#) "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

[Col. 3:23](#) Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, [Col. 3:24](#) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

- Treasure is the Bible's term for the affections of our heart, whether things on earth or in the Kingdom
  - And the Lord knew Christians would be tempted to put the Kingdom Program work on our back burner
  - The enemy is a powerful adversary and he has a million schemes to tempt us to pursue this world instead of pursuing Christ
  - The enemy tempts us to become Condition 3 Christians, to arousing the passions of our flesh to seek after the world's pleasures
- But our Heavenly Father loves us and He wants to incentivize us to make sacrifices for His Kingdom Program
  - And He does so by offering us a reward in Heaven if we serve Him now, greater treasure than anything we can obtain here
  - That reward is *not* our salvation, and in fact it's only available to those who are already Heaven bound by faith in Jesus

- The treasure that man discovered in that field pictures our eternal rewards, a treasure awaiting us in Heaven
  - That treasure is hidden in the sense that we can't see it now
    - It's awaiting us in the next life, to be revealed after we die and enter into the presence of the Lord
    - But we can discover it now...
    - Like the man in the field, we can learn about this hidden treasure as the Lord reveals its existence to us in His word
  - And now that we've learned about its existence, the choice is ours...are we willing to set aside our pursuit of this world so we may earn treasure in the next?
    - We earn it by serving the Lord with our good works
    - And those works we do in obedience to Christ now will form the basis for how Christ assigns us rewards in Heaven
  - As Paul explains

**2Cor. 5:9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

**2Cor. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Paul says that our lives should be directed to one – and only one – goal: pleasing the Lord
- What's the goal of a Christian's life? Pleasing the Lord
- And we should all live according to that goal, Paul says, because all believers will appear before Christ for a judgment moment one day
  - That judgment isn't assessing our salvation...our salvation is never in question
  - If you have placed your faith in Jesus, you are born again, and immediately and forever saved from the penalty of sin
  - But having been saved, we now become accountable to Jesus for how we serve Him
- And so we will face a judgment moment before Christ, Paul says

- In that moment, Paul says, Christ evaluates our works so He may recompense or reward us for our deeds whether good or bad
- A good work is any Kingdom Program service we gave to Christ as prompted by the Spirit
- While a bad work is anything we did in our flesh, something we did for the purpose of gaining things of this world
- These bad works go uncompensated...because as Jesus says elsewhere, we've already gained our reward for those works here
- So the parable of the hidden treasure teaches us that the Lord has provided an incentive for His children to make sacrifices for the Kingdom Program
  - He's told us that we have the opportunity to receive reward for those sacrifices of service
    - And in the final parable for today, Jesus teaches what a disciple does when he or she learns this truth

[Matt. 13:45](#) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, [Matt. 13:46](#) and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

- This parable is very similar to the earlier one, except for one key difference
  - In the parable of the man in the field, he wasn't looking for treasure
  - He stumbled upon it in the field, and once he learned about it he changed his entire life to obtain what he discovered
- But now in this parable, we have a merchant seeking fine pearls
  - He's already seeking treasure, and in fact his whole way of life is focused on buying and selling treasure
  - So he's always got his eye out for that rare find, that exceptional pearl
  - And Jesus says when he comes across that perfect pearl, he recognizes it because he's been trained in what to look for
  - He's knows opportunity when it comes his way

- This parable is a compliment to the earlier one, obviously
  - It pictures the attitude and lifestyle of a believer who has learned the truth about eternal rewards
    - That believer will set his or her mind on looking for opportunity to serve Jesus, to finding that pearl of great price
    - We're always on the look-out for where we can please the Lord in serving the Kingdom
    - And when opportunity comes our way, we've trained ourselves to recognize it and seize
  - In fact, we're ready to walk away from everything we have, if necessary, to please the Lord and obtain His reward
    - So when the Lord offers us the opportunity to enter the mission field or to teach that Bible class or give that donation, we're ready
    - Or maybe the Spirit points out that stranger at the airport or in the mall and asks us to present the Gospel message
  - When we reach those moments, we need to be like that merchant...we need to have our hearts trained
    - We need to understand this heavenly economy, that the opportunity for treasure is on the line
    - But more than that, we need to be on the watch for these moments, like a merchant trained to spot a pearl
    - Otherwise, we may pass them by, giving in to the worries and pleasures and riches of this world
- The Lord has called each of us by the word of His grace to become part of His body by faith, and by our faith we have received the assurance of salvation
  - And He has always called us to participate in the Kingdom Program
    - The enemy doesn't want us to answer that call and he will try to choke off our fruitfulness
    - Which is why the Lord tells us about the opportunity to receive Heavenly rewards if we produce fruit

- So the question now is what are you willing to do now that you have discovered this treasure?