

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 13

Preface:

In the previous chapter of Matthew's gospel account we saw that the religious leaders, the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Herodians all rejected Jesus' claim to be the Messiah even though He performed the miracles that had been prophesied about Him. This came to a climax when they attributed those sign miracles to the work of the Devil (Beelzebul). Knowing that His Messianic claim was being rejected, Jesus turned to His disciples so that He could explain to them that something other than the long expected Kingdom was coming. The Messianic Kingdom had been rejected, but another kind of Kingdom was coming.

Although He had occasionally taught with parables in the past, Jesus' teaching now took on a new form. From this point forward, he taught almost exclusively in parables. The word parable comes from the Greek word *parabolē*, meaning "to cast alongside." It is a method of teaching heavenly truths by telling earthly stories. First, he had to explain to them the truth about the Kingdom, and then He explained to them some facts about the church and the end of the age.

His use of parables puzzled the disciples. He called them "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" In the New Testament, a "mystery" is a spiritual truth understood only by divine revelation. During this discourse, Jesus taught a series of seven interrelated parables, then added an eighth. This series of parables explains the course of the Gospel in the world. If Israel had received Him as King, the blessings would have flowed from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. But, since Jesus had been rejected as the Messiah, He had to institute a new program on earth, the mystery kingdom and the church.

During the church age, the kingdom of heaven is a mixture of good and bad, true and false, believers and unbelievers. It is what we today call "Christendom," with many followers professing allegiance to the King, and yet doing much that is contrary to the principles of the King. It is in many ways like what the Pharisees had done to God's perfect Law. Let's see what we can learn about this mystery kingdom.

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear."

Mark 4:1-9 – ¹Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ²And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³"Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Luke 8:4-8 – ⁴And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: ⁵"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Notes:

Knowing that the Pharisees were against Him and plotting His demise, Jesus went out to the sea shore and the crowd followed. The crowd was so large that he had to get into a boat and move out a little way into the water. There, he sat and taught like the rabbis did.

However, His teaching style here became almost entirely via parables. The first parable is a key pivotal teaching. Unlike other parables about the kingdom, He did not start it off with "the kingdom of heaven is like ..." The reason appears to be because He was now introducing the new kingdom, the "mystery kingdom." It was not to be the Messianic Kingdom that the Jews had been waiting for, but one that would be for both Jews and Gentiles. And, although this kingdom would not begin until the day of Pentecost, He taught them much about this mystery kingdom. This expression, "the Times of the Gentiles" is sometimes equated with the "church age," but they are not the same. The church age began at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out, and it will end with the rapture of the church. The Times of the Gentiles is a reference to times when Jerusalem was under foreign dominance. It began in 597 BC when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. The Jews experienced semi-independence under the Hasmonean Dynasty for about 100 years. They were subsequently defeated and scattered by the Romans in AD 70. Then, in 1948 the United Nations recognized the nation of Israel and the Jews are once again independent, but they will be overcome again by the Anti-Christ in the middle of the Tribulation. The Times of the Gentiles will end with the second coming of Jesus when He defeats the forces of the Anti-Christ and reclaims Jerusalem. Luke is the only one of the gospel writers who specifically names this period in history. Here's what he said:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations.

Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
(Luke 21:20-24)

Both Matthew (Matthew 24:16-21) and Mark (Mark 13:15-17) talk about a similar sounding event. However, they are talking about what we refer to as the Abomination of Desolation spoken by Daniel the prophet, which occurs at mid-trib. What Luke is talking about is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 when the Jews were scattered to the four winds and the Gentiles took total occupation of Jerusalem and the Temple.

This Parable of the Sower is one of only two parables that Jesus later explained to His disciples. This is a parable about salvation by faith. The seed is the Word of God, the Gospel message. There are four types of soil in this parable which represent four types of people and their response to the gospel. The four types of soil are: the trodden pathway where the seeds were quickly snatched away, the rocky soil with little dirt, the soil covered by thorny weeds, and the good soil. We will cover Jesus' explanation of this parable in verses 18-23.

He concludes this parable with the command, "He who has ears, let him hear." In other words, listen attentively if you want to understand.

The Purpose of the Parables

Matthew 13:10-17

¹⁰Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" ¹¹And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Mark 4:10-12 – ¹⁰And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹²so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Luke 8:9-10 – ⁹And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

Notes:

Jesus' disciples were not used to this style of teaching. So, they asked Him why teach in such a cryptic manner. They knew many in the crowd would not understand. So, He explained to them that He didn't want everyone to understand.

Learning from these parables required the disciples to listen carefully and put effort into understanding. Deciphering a parable is similar to translating a foreign language. First you have to know the meaning of the individual words and the idioms of that language. Then you have to learn the grammar of the foreign language. Finally, you have to apply all of this within the context. The disciples did not understand any of this, so Jesus began by teaching them what some of the words and idioms mean.

Before we get into that, however we need to look at verse twelve. This is a key verse regarding discipleship that most Christians miss. Regarding the process of understanding the parables, Jesus said,

For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

We are used to seeing this expression in the context of the parable of the talents ([Matthew 25:14-30](#)) where it indicates that the servants who wisely used what their master gave them were given even more, and those who misused what was given to them had some or all of it taken away.

The meaning here is similar, but not the same. The person who listens intently to the Word of God and puts effort into understanding the teaching and parables, storing it in his or her heart, will be given even more understanding. On the other hand, the person who doesn't even try to understand God's Word will understand less and less. Let this be a warning to all of us.

The Parable of the sower Explained

Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Mark 4:13-20 – ¹³And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the word. ¹⁵And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Luke 8:11-15 – ¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they

hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Notes:

As we noted earlier, this is one of the two parables that Jesus explained to His disciples. In the Greek text, this verse starts off with the second person plural pronoun *humeis*, meaning “you, plural.” We have learned before that word order in Greek is very significant. The first word in a sentence is often put there for emphases. Jesus had just told His disciples, whoever has ears, listen! Now he is just as emphatically saying, “Now, **you disciples** listen to what I am saying.”

The seed is the Word of God and the soil represents the heart of the hearers. There are four types of soil in this parable: the trodden pathway where the seeds were quickly snatched away, the rocky soil with little dirt, the soil covered by thorny weeds, and the good soil.

The seed that fell on the trodden pathway represents people who hear the Word but do not understand it (and, apparently make little or no effort to understand.) This includes all those who reject the Gospel message outright and turn away from it. But, this group also includes those who go to church today for the fellowship, the music, and/or the satisfaction that they are doing “the things a good person is supposed to do.” No matter how good the preaching is, they get nothing out of it. The Word has not taken root in their heart.

Next is the seed that fell on the rocky ground. The word translated “rocky” is a form of *petros*, which does not refer to gravel or dirt with a lot of little rocks mixed in, but to a massive boulder. It is the type of rock upon which a solid foundation is built. Another word translated “rock” is *lithos*, referring to stone which has been cut from a *petros* and is used for building. A similar word translated “stone” is *psephos*, which refers to a small pebble. The rocky ground that Jesus is referring to here is not ground that has a lot of rocks in it, it is dirt that overlays boulders or that is caught in the crevices of large boulders. This type of soil is very shallow and does not allow roots to grow deeply. Jesus equates this with a person who is looking for a safe haven in Christianity. This person is quickly disappointed and discouraged when difficult times or trials come. Jesus warned his disciples that in this world Christians have tribulation. And, James tells us that it is these trials that build our faith and our patience. Therefore, according to James, instead of fearing these trials and getting discouraged from them, we should welcome them, knowing that they will build our faith. The person with no depth of root in himself or herself rejects the Gospel message because it is not convenient or it does not fit their lifestyle. These people may attend church for a while, but they don’t last because it is not what they are looking for.

The thorny ground refers to people who are so invested in the world system and the pursuit of riches that they can’t accept the type of peace and security that Jesus offers. This type of soil describes many of the members of a “seeker friendly” church, one that tries to blend the gospel with a feel-good relevance to society, without expecting the members to forsake worldliness. Our churches today have many of this type of professing Christian who try to keep one foot in the world and one foot in Christianity.

Of the four types of soil, only the good soil will produce genuine converts. The evidence of true conversion is described by the fruit of their lives.

As we noted previously, this parable is introducing the “mystery kingdom” during the age of the Gentiles. Unlike the Millennial Kingdom that the Jews were expecting, where the law was supreme and the Messiah would rule with an iron rod, this kingdom is based on faith and a resolve to wholeheartedly commit to and follow the Lord of all the earth. And, as we said before, the mystery kingdom of heaven is a mixture of good and bad, true and false, believers and unbelievers; people professing allegiance to the King, and yet clinging to much that is contrary to the principles of the King.

The Parable of the Weeds

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' ²⁸He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Notes:

This parable and the next two are also about the “mystery kingdom.” This parable specifically addresses the false believers that are within God’s field (the church). The word of God is being sown and is landing on fertile earth where it grows and produces fruit. But alongside the wheat, the enemy sows weeds (darnel). Darnel is a poisonous plant, and it was against Roman law to sow darnel in someone else’s field. This particular weed can’t be distinguished from wheat until the end of the growing season when the wheat produces an abundance of grains of wheat, but the darnel produces a different kind of seed that is easily distinguishable from the wheat. The roots of these plants become intertwined so that if the darnel is pulled up before harvest time, it will cause the good wheat to be uprooted also.

Today in the church there are weeds among the wheat. On the surface, these “professing” Christians are indistinguishable from born again believers. The only way to distinguish them is by the fruit that they (do or don’t) bear. It might seem reasonable to try to rid the local congregation of these “poisonous professors,” but they are so difficult to identify that it would not only be useless, but counterproductive. Think of the Inquisition, when the Christian church under the Pope tried to rid itself of unbelievers. There were far more believers tortured and killed during the inquisition than unbelievers.

Jesus will explain this parable of the weeds in verses 36 through 43.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³²It is the smallest of all seeds, but

when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Mark 4:30-34 – ³⁰And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade." ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Luke 13:18-19 – ¹⁸He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Notes:

As noted above, this is another parable about the "mystery kingdom." We are not given an explanation of this parable, so we have to use the information we have already been given to figure it out. The mustard seed is a very small seed. It is not the smallest seed known to man but it is the smallest seed known about in first century Israel. In spite of the diminutive size of the seed, this mustard plant (which is different from the plant that mustard is produced from today) can grow as tall as 15 feet. Although it is not a tree in the strictest sense, it is large enough that birds build their nests in it.

From **Matthew 13:4** and **Matthew 13:19**, we learn that the birds represent Satan and his family, therefore, in this parable the birds must indicate false Christians. From Old Testament passages such as **Daniel 4:12** and **Ezekiel 17:23** we can deduce that the large mustard plant is a reference to the tremendous growth of the Church into a worldwide power. This aptly describes the worldwide "church" today which has many different branches and, as we have already noted, is filled with false believers who exist comfortably within the church.

The Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:33

³³**He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."**

Luke 13:20-21 – ²⁰And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

Notes:

The parable of the mustard seed teaches us about the massive external growth of the church and the infiltration of unbelievers into the body. The parable of the leaven teaches us about the pervasiveness of false doctrine and sin within the body. Throughout the Bible, leaven (yeast) is a symbol of evil. Jesus used the image of leaven to picture hypocrisy (**Luke 12:1**), false teaching (**Matthew 16:6-12**), and worldly compromise (**Matthew 22:16-21**). These three are pervasive throughout the church today. The Apostle Paul used the symbolism of leaven as a picture of carnality in the church (**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**) and false doctrine (**Galatians 5:9**). These are like leaven in that they grow quietly and they gradually corrupt more and more as they grow.

Taking these last three parables together we see that the mystery kingdom began with the sowing of the word. Satan opposed the work of God in three ways: by sowing counterfeit Christians, by encouraging a false growth, and by introducing and propagating false doctrine. If we look around and observe the growing strength of the world system today and the declining strength of the true church, we might think that Satan is winning the battle. Do not despair, my brothers and sisters in Christ. God has a plan and He will accomplish all that He has set out to accomplish.

Parables are the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Matthew 13:34-35

³⁴All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

Notes:

We are now told that another reason for Jesus' teaching in parables was to fulfill prophecy. This appears to be a reference to [Psalms 78:2](#),

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, ([Psalms 78:2](#))

Matthew's quotation appears to be from the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament. This psalm was written by a prophet and musician named Asaph. He was a descendant of Levi (the priestly tribe) and was assigned by King David as one of the worship leaders. The Psalms attributed to him include [Psalms 50](#) and [Psalms 73-83](#).

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

Matthew 13:36-43

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Notes:

We talked about this parable a little in verses 24 through 30. The church today (both the church universal and local congregations) have sons of the evil one who are indistinguishable from the true sons of the kingdom. As we pointed out above, it is futile to try to weed out "professing Christians" from the true children of God. Fortunately, we don't have to.

The Rapture will end the church age, but not the "mystery kingdom." Many of those who are left behind at the Rapture will realize that they never were believers and will finally believe. A lot of these will be forced to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the gospel. There will also be others who come to faith during the Tribulation period. At the end of the Tribulation, at the return of

Christ, the earth will be harvested. This is depicted in [Revelation 14:14-20](#). It includes both what are called the wheat harvest and the grape harvest. Some believe that the wheat harvest represents the ingathering of the faithful believers and the grape harvest represents the ingathering of the lost. Whether that is the case or not, at the end of the Tribulation there will be a harvest and believers will be separated from unbelievers.

Then they will all be judged by Christ sitting on His throne. This is referred to as the sheep and goat judgment where the sheep (believers) and goats (unbelievers) will be separated out (just like the parable of the wheat and darnel indicates). This judgment is described in [Matthew 25:31-46](#).

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44

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."

Notes:

This parable and the next are different from the previous ones. One common interpretation of this parable is that the hidden treasure is Jesus Christ and that when a sinner finds Christ he gives up all that he possesses to gain Him and be saved. There are several problems with this interpretation. The first is that Jesus Christ is not, and never has been, hidden. He is the best known person in the entire history of the world. The second problem is that a sinner is blind and does not find Christ by his or her own effort.

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: "He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them." ([John 12:39-40](#))

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ([2 Corinthians 4:3-4](#))

And, it is not the sinner who finds God, it is the Savior who finds the lost sinner:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. ([Luke 19:10](#))

The third problem with this interpretation is that no one can purchase salvation. Also notice that the man in this parable did not purchase the treasure, he purchased the entire field. Finally, if the treasure did represent salvation and a lost sinner **could** purchase it, would he hide it again? It just doesn't fit the parable.

A better interpretation of this parable is that the treasure is the nation of Israel which is expressed as God's treasured possession in [Exodus 19:5](#)

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; ([Exodus 19:5](#))

Israel's purpose was to bring glory to God and evangelize the entire world. Upon failing to do either of these things, God judged Israel and allowed her to be conquered and scattered (hidden). Jesus Christ gave His all to purchase the field (the world) so He could bring Israel back as His treasure. One day, God will usher in His Millennial Kingdom with Israel as the centerpiece.

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

Matthew 13:45-46

⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Notes:

Like the parable of the lost treasure, many people interpret this parable as a lost sinner finding Christ and paying all he has for his salvation. The objections to this are similar to the ones we just discussed regarding the treasure. No lost sinner ever "found" Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one who does the finding. And – no one can purchase salvation.

A better interpretation of this parable is that the pearl represents the church. The church, the body of Christ, is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus gave all that He had (His life) to purchase the church. And, within the church there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. As Paul said:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands ... For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:11, 14)

The body of Christ is one and is inseparable. Likewise, the pearl is the only gemstone that cannot be separated without destroying it. It can't be carved or split like a diamond or an emerald. Like the church, the pearl is a product of suffering. A pearl grows gradually just as the body of Christ does and its true growth is hidden.

The Parable of the Net

Matthew 13:47-52

⁴⁷"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹"Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Notes:

In the parable of the net, Jesus is teaching His disciples what will happen at the end of the present age. This age will end with the return of Jesus at the conclusion of Daniel's 70th week (which we call the Tribulation). At that time, Jesus will sit on his throne and will perform the Sheep and Goat Judgment. Then, the good fish (true believers) and bad fish (unbelievers) will be divided into two groups (the sheep and the goats). Remember, this will not include the church, because the church will be raptured before Daniel's 70th week begins.

Just as the net will include both good and bad fish, those who survive the Great Tribulation will include those who are believers and those who aren't. This is described in [Matthew 25:31-46](#). The believers (sheep) will be ushered into the Millennial Kingdom,

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)

The unbelievers (goats) will not enter the Kingdom, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' (Matthew 25:41)

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

Matthew 13:53-58

⁵³And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there, ⁵⁴and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household." ⁵⁸And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

Mark 6:1-6 – ¹He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ⁴And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." ⁵And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

Luke 4:16-30 – ¹⁶And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²²And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself.' What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well." ²⁴And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, ²⁶and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹And they rose up

and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. ³⁰But passing through their midst, he went away.

Notes:

As we have pointed out previously, Matthew does not document the ministry of Jesus in chronological order. Right after he taught the parables in this chapter he got into a boat and went across the Sea of Galilee where he cast the legion of demons out of the Gadarene Demoniac. Upon returning, he went to his home town of Nazareth and did what is described here in verses 53-58. He went into the synagogue where He was given the scroll of Isaiah to read. It was customary for a visiting rabbi to be given a scripture passage and expound on it. After reading [Isaiah 61:1-2](#), a Messianic passage, He announced to all,

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ([Luke 4:21](#))

But, because the people were so familiar with Him, having watched Him grow up in Nazareth, they found it hard to accept Him as a prophet, let alone as the Messiah. Therefore, since the people of Nazareth rejected Him, like the Pharisees before them, He would not do any more miracles in Nazareth.

So What?

Most of you are here because you want to know more about God and what He expects from us. This is an attitude that He wants from us. And – according to verse twelve, those who seek better understanding will get it, but those who aren't interested in learning will lose even that which they have learned previously. You who are here to learn all you can about God and the Bible, be encouraged and comforted. This, too, is an act of righteousness. You are putting a smile on God's face. We are part of God's mystery kingdom, right now.

But, we live in a crazy world today. The prestige and influence of the church has largely disappeared. The parables of the weeds, the mustard seed, and the leaven are well advanced today. The recent events surrounding the presidential elections should put us all on notice that the god of this age is at work and seems to be accomplishing his purpose. Many true Christians today are appalled and some are scared.

I believe that we are seeing God's eternal plan being accomplished in spite of what may look like impending doom for this country, and perhaps for Christians. Consider how the Israelites felt as they headed out of Egypt. Having arrived at the Red Sea, they suddenly discovered that Pharaoh and his army were in hot pursuit and the Israelites had nowhere to turn, but God was about to take care of them if they would only believe and act on faith.

When they sent the 12 men in to spy out the land, 10 of the 12 brought back a bad report. The people were scared and did not act on faith as Joshua and Caleb encouraged them to do. As a result, God let them wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Then, at the end of 40 years, as they were about to cross over the Jordan river and enter the Promised Land, Moses told them:

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you." Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. It is the LORD who goes before you. He will

be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."
(Deuteronomy 31:6-8)

And when David was old he gathered Israel in front of his son Solomon to encourage and strengthen them.

Then David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous and do it. Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed, for the LORD God, even my God, is with you. He will not leave you or forsake you ... (1 Chronicles 28:20)

And, in the Psalms, David tells us this:

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.
(Psalms 37:1-5)

Finally, in the New Testament book of Hebrews we are told:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
(Hebrews 4:14-16)

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

I have told you before that I believe the prophetic signs are pointing to the imminent occurrence of the rapture of the Church. But, even if the rapture does not take place before the demise of the United States of America, I believe that God will watch over and protect true believers who are submitted to His will. Over the past 45 years, Conie and I have seen God protect and provide for us in ways that were sometimes subtle and sometimes dramatic. As we have committed our ways to God and trusted in Him, He has taken care of us.

Do not fear, my friends. God is on His throne. He will watch over His children. Be strong and courageous, He will never leave you nor forsake you.!

Additional notes on the Times of the Gentiles

The Times of the Gentiles is a reference to times when Jerusalem was under foreign dominance. It began in 597 BC when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. From that time, Jerusalem and its temple were under foreign rulers (Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, Ptolemies, and Seleucids) until 167 BC when the Jews revolted. This led to the Independent Hasmonean dynasty which ruled Israel until the Romans defeated them in 63 BC. Then, under Roman rule, the Jews were allowed semi-autonomy until AD 70 when the Romans invaded the Jewish state, the Temple was destroyed, the Israelites scattered throughout the world, and the Romans (Gentiles) took over Jerusalem. In 1948, the Jewish state of Israel was formed by the United Nations and the Jews were given full autonomy of their country. But, this did not end the Times of the Gentiles. In the middle of the Tribulation, Israel will once again be defeated (by the Anti-Christ). The Times of the Gentiles will end with the second coming of Jesus when He reclaims Jerusalem and sets it up as the capitol of His Messianic Kingdom.

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