

Secrets of the Kingdom 1 (13:1 – 17:21)

Matthew 13:1 – 52

Jesus told parables as a code not just to illustrate the truth but to conceal it. He needed to teach his followers the Kingdom secrets which would provoke them to great Kingdom growth, but needed to do so under the noses of his enemies. Jesus warns the disciples to guard the Gospel message which they proclaim as the Kingdom could only thrive in their hands because the power was in the message and not in the messengers.

Therefore the seven parables of chapter 13 require us to read between the lines; it is the seed which grows, the yeast which spreads, the mustard seed which skyrockets, and the net which draws in the fish. All the workers need to do is, sow, throw, mix and wait = easy and difficult. But, we want to tweak, change, adapt and reconstitute the Gospel message to try and win more converts to Christ. Thing is, unless we sow what God gives us we will never reap what God promises us.

- ❖ What we preach is what we get.
 - ❖ Superficial message = superficial and partial conversions.
 - ❖ Too many oxygen-starved converts can sink a church's witness.
- Better to preach from the onset that anyone who follows Jesus;-
 - i. "must deny himself and take up his cross" – Matthew 16 vs. 24
 - ii. "you cannot serve both God and money" – Matthew 6 vs. 24
 - Quality matters more than quantity → Jesus wanted genuine hearts.
 - Jesus warns his disciples to be ready for discouragement.
1. Some people don't want to hear at all and some don't want to pay the price.
 - ❖ We can't take the *Parable of the Sower* out of the Bible.
 2. Some choose self rule over God's Kingdom.
 - *Parable of Weeds* = burn in hell.
 3. Some will stay and masquerade as Christians.
 - ❖ *Parable of Net* = thrown away as rotten fish.
- # Jesus warns not to deal too harshly or we will lose some of the genuine catch. Instead we must train ourselves to see the grace of God in even the most compromised churches, reminding ourselves that he will return and set things right.
4. Small group of people can take the Gospel message all over.
 - ❖ Small amount of yeast covers all the dough – *Parable of the Yeast*.
 5. Even a tiny mustard seed can conquer more lands than the mightiest empires of history!
 - ❖ *Parable of the Mustard Seed*

- # It might take time but it's worth the wait when each radical convert becomes a radical missionary and produces many others like himself.
 - 6. Jesus has already purchased the nations of the earth as treasure which cost him his life.
 - ❖ Parables of the *Hidden Treasure* and the *Pearl*, talking primarily of Jesus' sacrifice for the Gospel, *not* our own.
 - ❖ We sacrifice *all* for the Gospel, but *only* because he did so first.
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Matthew 13:24 – 30, 36 – 43

When faced with such injustice and suffering as the holocaust, people finger God. Is he not strong enough to stop it? Or worse, is he not good enough to want to?

- ❖ This is the greatest non-Christian objection to the gospel.
- ❖ Parable of Weeds shows why he hasn't yet judged evil and suffering in world.

Jesus reassures us that God is good. He hates pain and injustice more than we do.

- ❖ He sowed nothing but '*good seed*' in the world.
- ❖ But we invited Satan's very '*bad seed*' to take root in God's perfect world → Satan caught men napping, but not the Lord (Psalm 121 vs. 3-4).
- ❖ Sin and disaster then overcame world.
 - When we complain that God permits such suffering, we are effectively asking '*Let your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven*'. It will indeed come, but when it does many will wish that they had never asked.

Jesus says suffering persists in the world not because of God's indifference, but because of his *mercy*. A day is coming, very soon, when he will root out 'everything that causes sin and all who do evil. We all are guilty of sinning.

- Due to his mercy he delays the Day of Judgment in order to save those he is still to call and save.
- Until the full number of people have been saved, he restrains his harvesters because "*while you are pulling the weed, you may root out the wheat with them*" vs.29.
- Day of harvest will come and evil doers will be thrown into hell but His people will be gathered into God's barn.
- Jesus sympathises with our questions about suffering because he experienced the worst human suffering in his own frail body.
- Jesus became the Farmer stooping to become a blade of wheat – so that he could bear the punishment we deserve.
- Jesus doesn't mind us asking why God allows suffering, but he wants us to move from complaining to doing something about it.

We are able to save humans simply by telling the story of the Farmer who laid down his life to redeem a mighty harvest.

In the face of human suffering we cannot keep this message to ourselves!