

Matthew 13:44-58 – “Parables of Great Worth”

We continue looking at the rest of these Kingdom Parables as we finish up Matthew 13 today. These Kingdom Parables are detailing the program of God that is taking place between His first and second comings. It's what is going to be taking place while we wait for the coming Kingdom that Jesus will bring when He returns.

So we'll look at the last 4 of these Kingdom Parables today and we see with the first 3 that the kingdom will be made up of 3 groups of people: Israel, the Church, and Gentile nations.

Remember, Jesus spoke the remainder of these parables to His disciples only: **Matthew 13:36**, *"Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.""*

The parables spoken before that all communicated that the work of God would be continuing on but it would also be at work among the evil taking place in the world and at the hands of the devil. It would look very different than what the Old Testament predicted regarding the earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God. But to be sure that the disciples were not losing hope, Jesus shares these next parables to reveal what He is doing in this interim period.

1. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure – 13:44

13:44 – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

In a day where people couldn't just deposit their funds in a bank, people would often bury their treasure in fields. Sometimes they'd forget where they hid it.

- My wife and I decided to take an impromptu trip to Ireland a couple weeks ago. We went there for a couple days. We weren't even sure what currency they used the night before we left. We found out it was Euro and so my wife looked around our room to see if there was any and she found an envelope that had a bunch of Euro in it. We didn't even know we had it. We were overjoyed! It was like finding lost treasure, literally!!

The field is the world, Jesus is the man, and I see the treasure representing a remnant of believing Israel.

- **Exodus 19:5**, *"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."*
- **Psalms 135:4**, *"For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure."*

You see, Jesus came into the world and came for the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24). He came to them, but they rejected Him in large part. So, they were put aside; hidden (they've been dispersed around the world). But the Lord gave all when He went to the cross to redeem them; to purchase back His claim, and He's not done with Israel yet.

- Notice there's no mention in this parable of Jesus retrieving this treasure. This mystery age we're in is a time where Israel remains blinded in part and unconverted.
- But when the church is removed, Israel will be the focus again and there will be a national repentance and restoration. They will yet rise out of the ash heap when Jesus returns, and Israel encounters her Redeemer. And they will be part of God's millennial kingdom.

This parable has often times been interpreted as the Church finding the treasure of Jesus Christ and giving up all to receive Him. But this goes against Scripture and the doctrine of grace which teaches that salvation is a free gift and cannot be purchased or earned.

2. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price – 13:45-46

13:45-46 - ***"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."***

Again, this parable has often been interpreted to speak of the riches of finding Christ. He's like a pearl of great price that's worth us selling all to purchase. But again, this violates what Scripture teaches about salvation.

First of all, we don't seek after salvation. Jesus seeks after us. He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 10:10). The merchant is Jesus, which also remains consistent with the other parables of this chapter in identifying the man. Jesus does the initiating; we are simply the responders. We don't act in a way where God now has to respond to us. In all things, He is the initiator, and we respond to all He's graciously done.

We cannot purchase or earn salvation. Nothing we can do will cause God to say, ‘*Oh wow, you really deserve this redemption now.*’ Salvation is something we receive as a free gift from a loving Saviour. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:10, 19).

Who’s the pearl of great price? That would be us, the church. We were unlovable; there was nothing of worth in us to begin with. We were foreigners, and at enmity with God.

- But just like a pearl that starts as an irritant of sand in the shell of an oyster and begins to have a secretion coating that irritant which eventually forms a pearl, this so wonderfully relates to us. We the church were formed through the suffering and crucifixion that Jesus endured for us. We may be little specks of dirt, yet we’re covered and clothed in Christ’s righteousness by which we become a beautiful pearl – a valued treasure in His eyes.
- And He gave all He had, He gave His life, to purchase us out of the grip of this world.

What’s interesting is that these two parables have very different subjects that the kingdom is likened to. It’s likened to treasure in one, but likened to the merchant in the other. The treasure is redeemed Israel as the kingdom is largely linked with the nation of Israel. The Jewish people will be the key subjects of that kingdom.

- “As we have mentioned, the church is not the same as the kingdom. All who are in the church are in the kingdom in its interim form, but not all who are in the kingdom are in the church. *The church will not be in the kingdom in its future form but will reign with Christ over the renewed earth.* The emphasis in the second parable is on the King Himself and the tremendous price He paid to woo and win a bride that would share His glory in the day of His manifestation.

As the pearl comes out of the sea, so the church, sometimes called the Gentile bride of Christ, comes largely from the nations. This does not overlook the fact that there are converted Israelites in it, but merely states that the dominant feature of the church is that it is a people called out from the nations for His Name. In Acts 15:14 James confirmed this as being the grand purpose of God at the present time.”¹

¹ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 1259). Thomas Nelson.

These parables would have brought great comfort to the disciples. Though evil will advance in the world and even corrupt the church, God’s redemptive plans will also advance and He will save many during this interim age.

3. The Parable of the Dragnet – 13:47-50

13:47-50 - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

The sea is seen symbolically in Scripture as the Gentile nations.

- We see here again the inclusiveness of the kingdom. Jesus’ kingdom reign is available to all, but only those that receive Jesus’ offer of salvation will enter in. It’s through faith in Jesus alone that we are made righteous and just and able to be inheritors of His kingdom.
- This also reinforces the view that leading up to the kingdom there will be just and unjust living together right up until the end. The church isn’t going to reform the world to Christ and usher in the kingdom. There will be a judgment and a separation of the wicked.
- **Matthew 25:41–46**, *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

4. The Parable of the Householder – 13:51-53

13:51 - Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

This is quite humorous. The disciples are questioned on their understanding of these things, and they answer with a hasty, **Yes, Lord**, though that was probably the furthest thing from the truth.

And Jesus is going to explain to them through one more parable that these are valuable truths that they should now be bringing out into the open.

13:52-53 - Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.”⁵³ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.

A scribe was a religious teacher or scholar of the Old Testament and Mosaic law. These disciples were being called to be like scribes, trained individuals who are passing on this treasured truth to those around them. They have a vast storehouse of riches, both in the Old Testament Scripture, and now through the mysteries of the kingdom that Jesus is revealing to them.

And the fact that they are **things new and old** doesn't mean some are outdated and obsolete. Rather these are things that have been prophesied in the Old, but have now been fulfilled in the New.

- The disciples began to see this later as many of their messages were grounded in the Old Testament. But they showed how it all pointed to Jesus!
- We too need a good balance of the past and present (old and new testaments). We'll be rich if we do.

Jesus now leaves Capernaum and returns to His hometown of Nazareth. This would be an opportunity for His disciples to receive some life lessons on what ministry will be like as they pass on these treasures.

5. Jesus' Rejection at Nazareth – 13:54-58

13:54-58 - When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?⁵⁶ And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?”⁵⁷ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.”⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Jesus had spoken in the synagogue at Nazareth before (Luke 4:16-30). This is where He took the scroll of Isaiah and opened it up to Isaiah 61:1-2 saying, *‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor...’* After finishing that passage He said, *‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’* Well, you can imagine that didn’t get well received. They were filled with wrath it says to the point where they were about to throw Jesus over the edge of a cliff. But He escaped from them. That’s when Jesus went up to Capernaum.

But after ministry and rejection in the Galilee area, He returns to Nazareth. And you may wonder, *Why!?!?*

Well, here’s the love and grace of Jesus in operation. He’s giving His hometown a second chance to hear the gospel and have an opportunity to be saved.

- Plus, this time He returns with His disciples. He’s returning as a functioning rabbi and is giving life lessons to His students. It was an opportunity to prepare them for their own mission that they will embark on shortly.
- We too may go through challenges and difficulties in life, but they’re meant to teach us and prepare us to be used in greater ways by the Lord.

So, the crowds are astonished. They hear Him teach and they’re beside themselves.

- Ever been astonished at someone’s teaching before? No? Of course not, what was I thinking asking such a question.

But they see His wisdom and they’ve seen His mighty works. Now remember, many of these people have seen Jesus growing up in Nazareth. They all see Him as a regular guy; someone who’s one of them. They know His family. He’s ordinary they’re thinking. But they can’t explain how He’s able to do all these things. So, we read that ***they were offended at Him*** (vs. 57).

- This word for offended is the Greek word *skandalizō*, where we get our word ‘scandalize’.
- It’s elsewhere translated as ‘cause to sin’ (Matt 5:29), or ‘made to stumble’ (Matthew 26:33).
- This is revealing the hardness of heart that the people in Nazareth had as well. As Jesus’ good work continued, many people’s hearts grew harder. And it became a cause of sin and was a stumbling block for them.
- Many people miss heaven by 8 inches – the distance from their head to their heart. People can see all they need to see and intellectually have all

the knowledge, yet they can fail to let that translate to an open heart to receive Jesus.

- **Romans 10:9–10**, *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

So, Jesus reveals that a prophet receives no honour in his own country.

Everywhere a prophet goes, they're usually well received, except in a place where familiarity breeds contempt.

May we continue to be in awe of who God is and the work of Jesus in our lives. Don't ever get comfortable with where you are or what you know. Give Jesus the honour and worship He is due.

Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus marveled at their unbelief. Because of their unbelief, Jesus didn't do many mighty works there. It's not because He couldn't, because nothing can restrain the work of God. Rather He chose to work here according to their belief. They will miss out on much because of their lack of faith.

- There's only one other time we read that Jesus marveled at something. And it was in the faith of the Roman Centurion. **Matthew 8:10**, *"When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*
- Sadly those who should have been ready to accept and receive Jesus would be the ones offended by Him. This is why Jesus spoke in parables and revealed why the kingdom will not be advancing in the way they imagined.
- May we grow in faith and live with open hearts to not only receive Jesus as our Lord and King, but to live for Him with expectant and grateful hearts.

What do we learn from Matthew 13 and the Kingdom Parables:

1. The Kingdom is Coming. But it will arrive when the King comes. In the meantime we are in this interim period of the church age.
2. Don't be discouraged when you see evil and wickedness continuing on. This doesn't mean God's work is being thwarted, He's at work in the midst of it. And He will come again with judgment to deal with the wicked and usher in His reign of peace and righteousness.
3. Jesus loves you with an everlasting love. He has given Himself to provide forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Have you received Him as your King?