

The Gospel of Matthew
Week Fifteen
Matthew 13:1-30

Day One

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

vs. 1&2 – **What house did Jesus go out from?** He probably had his own home, paid for by his family business that He had run in Nazareth. How do I know this? I don't. It would make sense, however, that Jesus ran the family business as the oldest son after Joseph, his father, had passed away. Jesus would have had access to some money to obtain a home in his adopted town of Capernaum.

The lake referred to is the Sea of Galilee, a large lake that is the source of the Jordan River. It is still an impressive place to visit and one that is spiritually moving for many who visit. This lake and its environs are where Jesus conducted most of his public ministry. Jesus went to the lakeside and people stopped what they were doing to follow and sit while He spoke. Wise people today still do the same thing – listen to Jesus, that is.

So much of what Jesus did involved teaching. Teaching, therefore, must be an important activity, one that is worthy of your efforts and time.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:12-14).

So many people came that Jesus had to stand in a boat while the people sat along the shore. Jesus drew large crowds because He had something to say and the authority to say it. God does not use people with potential; He uses people who have developed their potential. **Have you developed your potential? What more can you do that will enable God to use you more and more? Classes? School? Lessons?**

vs. 3&4 – Jesus spoke in parables, which are stories that have a lesson. I am always careful not to interpret the details in a parable, unless Jesus Himself interpreted them for us. The parable of the sower, which Jesus is about to tell, is one such parable where Jesus explained the meaning of each detail in the parable.

Jesus was a great teacher and used many analogies and examples that were meaningful to those who listened. When we speak, it isn't about us. It's about the message and those who hear. I am passionate to know that people who hear me will understand what I have to say. I will use any tool that will help accomplish that end – slides, handouts, illustrations, examples, and skits. I don't mind entertaining an audience as long as it helps them grasp my message. Remember what I have pointed out to you on many occasions:

The large crowd listened to him [Jesus] with delight (Mark 12:37).

Day Two

5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 He who has ears, let him hear."

vs. 5-9 – Without the explanation to follow, we would have no idea what Jesus was talking about, or it would be left to our personal interpretation. I want to have insight into God's word, but I don't want to be weird and force meanings that the Holy Spirit never intended.

One of the best ways to gain insight into God's word is to seek the Lord through study. This is something I have not done enough of the last few years. I prepare these studies and I prepare for teaching and preaching. Yet I am not satisfied with the depth of my understanding, so I have enrolled in a doctoral program at Reformed Theological Seminary. I have completed twenty percent of the program and it has helped me focus and discipline myself for study.

Yet when I study, all I can do is position myself for God to open my eyes to the truths in His word. While I work, any insight I receive is grace, but I must position myself to receive the grace. **What work are you doing to be able to receive God's grace?** The least you can do is pray for insight like the psalmist:

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; **do not let me stray from your commands.** I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O Lord; **teach me your decrees.** With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. **Do good to your servant, and I will live;** I will obey your word. **Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law** (Psalm 119:9-18).

Jesus often said, "I tell you the truth," and "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Jesus would always tell the truth but not everyone wanted to hear the truth. Those who wanted

to hear would hear, those who did not would go home and have no idea what Jesus was talking about.

Do you have ears to hear? Then what are you hearing? What new insight about God or His purposes do you have? How are you sharing this with other people? What difference has it made in your life and purpose? What changes do you need to make to gain more insight into God's word? I am not saying that you need to go back to school like I have done, but there is something you can do, or stop doing (like watching television), to provide the time you need to position yourself for the grace of insight into God's purposes.

Day Three

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"
11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

v. 10 – The disciples asked a good question. Good questions lead to good answers. One man said that quality questions lead to a quality life. I agree with him. A parable is a story that contains a lesson, but unless the lesson is explained, the parable remains just a story. I commend the disciples for asking a “why” question. Too often we don't understand but stop short of asking, which is the essence of seeking the Lord:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (Deuteronomy 29:29).

For what understanding are you seeking the Lord? What questions are you asking? What answers are you receiving? How are you preserving your answers?

v. 11 – There are secrets in God's kingdom, but He doesn't want them to remain secret. They are reserved, however, only for those who have entered the Kingdom, those who have a relationship with the King. The only source of answers for the disciples was Jesus; it's the same for you and me.

Is God being harsh in having secrets from some? Not at all! They have not met God's minimum requirements for learning, one of which is childlike humility. They are too proud to ask for answers and believe that they already have all the answers. The irony is that the Pharisees spent all day many days “seeking” answers to trivial questions about the Law. Then Jesus came along and the Pharisees didn't seek the Lord; they made a snap judgment that Jesus was using demonic power to achieve His results. You can see why God chose to hide His secrets from men like that. Some of the Pharisees did discover these secrets but it was only through seeking. The same is true for you.

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:1-2).

vs. 12&13 -- Once you start seeking God and are open to His answers, it is addictive! You find yourself wanting more and God wants you to have more. The Spirit gives us an appetite to grow in knowledge and then helps satisfy our hunger. **How hungry are you for the truth of God and His word? What price are you willing to pay to satisfy that hunger? How much time are you willing to invest?**

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings (Proverbs 25:2).

I am certain I want God on my side. I want Him giving me more and don't want Him hiding things from me because my heart or attitude are not right. **How about you?**

Day Four

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

vs. 14&15 – Jesus indicated that the dullness of those who did not understand Him or His meaning was a fulfillment of something Isaiah had said, quoted in Isaiah 6:9-10. At some point, those who had a change to hear and see had hardened their hearts and closed their eyes. God then cooperated with their decision to harden themselves. We see this dynamic in Pharaoh's life as well. First Pharaoh hardened his heart:

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had stopped, he sinned again: He and his officials hardened their hearts (Exodus 9:34).

Then God hardened it:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them (Exodus 10:1).

Lord, don't let me become hard of heart. I don't want to be a "professional" when it comes to You, someone with all the answers, an expert who doesn't feel he has much to

learn, except another expert. I want to be open to You and whatever means You choose to teach me.

v. 16 – While God hardens the hearts of some, He melts the hearts of others. Jesus' disciples saw and heard, but they could not take any credit for what they saw and heard. It was a matter of God's grace, but they had cooperated with God's grace. Therefore they were receiving insight from God and were going to receive a whole lot more. When I read what Jesus said here, I think of a verse from Proverbs:

[Ears that hear and eyes that see—the Lord has made them both \(Proverbs 20:12\).](#)

Of course the Lord made my eyes to see and my ears to hear, along with my feet to walk and my arms to lift. **Why would the wisdom writer feel the need to share with us this basic truth unless there was something else behind the obvious?** It is my opinion that the writer was sharing the very truth of these verses in Matthew, that we are blessed because we see and hear, something which only God can enable us to do.

v. 17 – Many saints of old, prior to Jesus, had longed to hear what Jesus heard. The writer of Hebrews told us that those old saints were looking for a city whose builder and maker is God (see Hebrews 11:13-16). **Do you rejoice that you hear and see things by God's grace that many were deprived of hearing prior to Jesus' ministry?**

[Day Five](#)

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

v. 18 – Then Jesus explained the meaning of His parable. **What would you like the Lord to explain for you?** Ask him and keep on asking and you will learn and see in time.

v. 19 – The parable of the sower was about the Kingdom. It referred to people who heard the same message but had different soil conditions that were either conducive or not to the development and application of the message. The first challenge that Jesus indicated for the Kingdom message was demonic opposition. The soil in this listener's heart is so shallow that the evil one is able to come and snatch it away. Their soil had perhaps been trafficked by many ideas and concepts and the soil had become so thin that the seed had

no place to take root and made it easy pickings for the “birds” to come and eat. The Pharisees were a great example of this.

vs. 20&21 – There was another kind of soil that was thin like the first example, but it wasn't due to traffic, but rather to rocks. The seed had a chance to sprout in the rocky soil, but there was no depth for the seed to take root. This shallowness caused the sprouts to die when persecution or some other difficulty arose. The believing Jews were a good example of this, as indicated by the writer of Hebrews. The seed had taken in many of them, but when Hebrews was written, they were considering going back to Judaism since they were so disillusioned.

v. 22 – The third kind of soil was one that was cluttered with a lot of thorns and weeds. There was too much competition for the Word to take deep root. This soil is exemplified by modern Western culture, infatuated by economic growth and materialism. We are the most “saved” generation ever, yet there is often precious little discipleship because many pursue a living that leaves no time and energy for much else let alone God. It is as much as some can do every week to make time for Sunday worship.

v. 23 – Those who receive the Word with gladness and understanding then find ways to apply the Word. The implication is that their soil has been prepared – weeded, the rocks removed, the thorns destroyed and topsoil added so there is adequate depth.

Now the question for you, dear reader, is: **what kind of soil do you have? Are you intimidated by persecution? Do the worries of this life rival the Word in your heart in any way? Are you “well-trafficked,” thus equating the word with other philosophies or worldly doctrines? Or do you receive and understand the Word, looking for ways to apply it to your heart attitudes? How can you be sure what kind of soil you have?** You can ask God to take a soil sample as they do in agriculture to test it and learn the condition? Ask God for examples of how you have responded lately to the Word so you can know your soil condition. Then take steps to make the soil receptive to the Kingdom message.

Day Six

24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

v. 24 – Matthew seemed to group his healing and teaching stories together. We are now in the midst of teaching stories about the kingdom of God. This particular story is similar to the parable of the sower in that it involves someone sowing seed in a field. There is nothing wrong with the seed, just like in the previous parable. It is good seed.

v. 25 – There is a rival seed to the good seed that is planted in the same field by an enemy of the man who sowed the good seed. We don't know who the enemy is, and it isn't important. We know, however, that the Kingdom has an enemy who works alongside the sowers of good seed.

vs. 26&27 – It can be hard to remember that we are fighting an unseen enemy who uses the cover of darkness and stealth to do his work. We must not be infatuated with our enemy, Satan, and his cohorts, however, but we must not ignore them either. **Are you fighting a problem that is demonic in its origin?** Remember that Jesus “healed” a man who was blind and mute due to an evil spirit in his life (see Matthew _____). It wasn't a physical problem or defect at all. Here are some other passages to help you understand and do battle with the forces of evil that oppose God's work in and through you.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Day Seven

28 " 'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "

v. 28-30 – Jesus did not give an explanation for this parable, but it is given in the context of the parable of the sower. Let's think of some potential lessons that we can derive from this story.

1. Jesus told us that this parable was about the kingdom of God, so this story tells us something about God's kingdom.
2. The kingdom seems to have two types of “people”: those who are from good seed and those who are weeds.
3. The tendency is to try and sort them out too early in the growth process, which would damage the good plants along with the weeds.
4. The Kingdom has the capability of separating them all in time.
5. Maturity will reveal a person's true fruit, whether good or weeds.
6. God is never in a hurry to judge, always wanting some to repent.

For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live (Ezekiel 18:32).

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance (Romans 2:4).

Can you think of any other lessons from this story?

I have often been impatient to “deal” with people and issues. Sometimes God just wants me to wait and He will sort it out. When we deal with things too soon, it can hurt the good people who don’t quite see or understand things as they are. When we wait, we allow God to fully reveal the truth that He saw but people didn’t.

Think of King Saul in the Old Testament. At first, he looked like wheat, but eventually revealed himself to be a weed. God was patient and in time everything became clear, and David was shown to be wheat.

Are you impatient for God to deal with someone or something? Be patient! First, you may be mistaken. If you wait, however, God will reveal the truth that you see to everyone and good people won’t be damaged by hasty action. Let the weeds grow with the wheat until the fullness of time and let God do His work, in His time and timing.