

**The Gospel of Matthew**  
**Week Sixteen**  
**Matthew 13:31-58**

**Day One**

31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." 33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." 34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

vs. 31&32 – This is the third parable in a series that Jesus taught the people about the kingdom of God. The first was about soil, the second was about weeds and this one is about the size of the seed. The Kingdom seed is small, as small as a mustard seed, which is about the size that a pencil point makes on a sheet of paper. **Can anything substantial come from such a small seed?** Indeed it can!

It is of note that the potential in the seed is all that's needed to produce a plant and fruit. As long as the planter gives the seed a chance to grow, the seed has the power in itself to do its job. That is how the Kingdom message is. It may seem small and insignificant at the time – a simple word, a verse of Scripture, a kind act – but that seed has the power within itself to produce something great. It's not about the sower or the technique, it's about the seed of the Kingdom! This sets me free from trying to "figure out" how to plant the seed. I must simply proclaim it, the power in the seed will take care of the rest. And from simple beginnings, great things can happen in the power of God.

"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. ***"Who despises the day of small things?"*** Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "(These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth" (Zechariah 4:9-10).

v. 33 – The fourth parable was a short, one-verse story of a woman who put yeast in some dough, and eventually the yeast did its job and leavened the whole lump. That is how the Kingdom message can be. It can enter a life, a society, a church or any other situation and make a deep impact just by the nature of the message, since it is "backed" by God's power.

There is power in the message of the Kingdom! All we must do is herald that it is here and introduce it to whoever will listen. The power inherent in the message will do its work from that point. **What are you doing to proclaim the Kingdom? What more can you do? How can you support others who are proclaiming it?**

v. 34 – Jesus used parables as a means to teach so that those who had a heart to understand would do so and those who did not would go home confounded and confused. This gets back to the issue of the soil in the first parable Jesus told in this section of Matthew’s gospel. The good soil would bear fruit; the bad soil would actually work against the message and power in the seed. **What kind of soil do you have? What can you do to make it more receptive to the Kingdom message?**

### Day Two

35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." 36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

v. 35 – Matthew was careful to frame much of what Jesus did from a biblical perspective. Keep in mind that Matthew was writing primarily to Jews, so he wrote his story so that Jews could accept the fact that Jesus was the Christ. In this verse, Matthew quoted Psalm 78:2. I can’t help but think that Jesus helped the disciples understand what He was doing from a biblical perspective after He came back from the dead:

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:27).

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

Jesus taught them things that were hidden since creation, but now revealed in Him. The disciples demonstrated how to know those secret things in the next verse.

v. 36 – The disciples came to Jesus and asked Him the meaning of the parables. That is the best way to learn about God and the things that matter to Him: you ask.

My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek” (Psalm 27:8).

**Are you seeking the Lord? What are you learning?** Remember what James wrote:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does (James 1:5-8).

It is amazing to me that people pray and then don’t believe that they are hearing from the Lord. God is not a trickster. If you ask Him, He will answer, but you must have faith

that He will answer. Otherwise you will keep on seeking but never coming to know the truth. **Are you seeking but doubting the answers?** Then seek again and have faith!

vs. 37&38 – Jesus provided the interpretation to the parable of the wheat and weeds to His disciples. Notice that Jesus acknowledged the existence of the devil. He is not a fictional character; he was and is real. If the devil opposed the Son of Man, he will oppose His disciples as well. That is not a sign that you are doing something wrong when he opposes you, but that you are doing the will of God!

Note too that the devil has “sons” just as God does. The sons of God will do good while the sons of the devil will do evil. You cannot get godly results or character from ungodly people, nor can you simply wish that the devil will leave you alone. He will not.

### Day Three

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

v. 40 – Jesus continued to explain the second parable of the wheat and weeds, which contains a reference to the final judgment. I wonder how much of this the disciples truly understood? We are familiar with this kind of talk about the end of the age, but I don't think the Jews were. The disciples had to accept some of what Jesus was saying by faith. Even where revelation and understanding are concerned, it is impossible to please God without faith.

vs. 41&42 – Jesus was once again speaking and teaching as God in this case, for no one but God could know this much about what would happen in the future. Jesus spoke confidently of what He would do at the end of the age when He sent out angels to do a work of separation in His kingdom. This also assumes that the angels will know the good from the evil, which again is a function of God's omniscience. And finally, this also assumes that there is a difference between good and evil people, which means there is an absolute right and wrong, something that modern citizens don't like to acknowledge.

Remember that Jesus was referring to the Jews when He mentioned evil people who caused others to sin. It seems that those who opposed Jesus and His message were considered evil in this context. **So what does that mean for those who want to come to God through another door, so to speak?** It seems that Jesus said it wasn't and isn't possible. He is the only way.

When people say that Jesus is the only Way to God, they claim that Christians are bigoted and narrow-minded. Are they? It seems that they are simply repeating what Jesus had already said. So when this accusation is made, it is really an accusation against God! It is like God saying, “There is one road to this city. You *must* take this road to

that city, since it's the only one." God has clearly revealed the road and given travelers critical insight into the way to that city. Yet the travelers wander around looking for another road, saying, "We know there must be another road. How cruel, God, that you would restrict our freedom like this by choosing only one road. We will search for another."

**Is that cruel?** I think it would be cruel if God did not reveal that road at all. Yet He has clearly marked the road and given ample warning that it is the only way to the destination. **Is it cruel to make a choice for God to reveal His will and expect His creatures to follow and adhere to that will?**

v. 43 – The choice is clear: take the road God has assigned and live, or try to find another road and perish. I want to live, so I will follow God's road. **What about you?** Those who take God's road, which is the Kingdom road, will live forever with Him. They will shine like the sun, according to this interpretation, reflecting God's glory like the moon reflects the sun's light. I want to shine like this. In fact, I was just reading Isaiah 60:

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you" (Isaiah 60:1-2).

#### Day Four

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

v. 44 – In case you haven't noticed, parables don't have to be long, drawn out stories. They can be simple analogies, such as is found in this verse. Jesus was on a "roll," delivering parable after parable about the kingdom of God. It seems that this parable speaks to the indescribable value of the Kingdom that merits a total commitment from those who discover it.

**Have you made a total commitment to God's purposes? Is the kingdom of God your objective in every area of life?** The Kingdom isn't just a church issue, but a life issue. You should look to extend and express God's kingdom in your work, finances, neighborhood, school, family and relationships. Every kingdom has a king, so when you walk in God's kingdom, you walk in the will of the King for every area of your life.

This can sound like a grievous thing to some who don't know our King or His kingdom. Yet the man in the parable had great joy when he found that Kingdom treasure. **Do you have joy in God's kingdom? If not, where is it lacking and why?** It would seem to me that if you don't see the value of the Kingdom, you will see walking in it as a loss – loss of freedom, loss of options, loss of doing what you want to do. If you see it for what it is, however, you will pay whatever price to obtain it.

vs. 45&46 – Jesus’ listeners were obviously familiar with pearls and greatly valued them then as people do today. So Jesus compared the Kingdom to a pearl, another example of a valuable treasure. **What price are you willing to pay to find God’s treasures?**

But the king [David] replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24).

I have devoted my entire life to the Kingdom of God. I have sold homes, given away cars, moved from one town to the next, spent half my year in a foreign land, invested large sums of money and abandoned my own plans for those of the Kingdom. I first “saw” the Kingdom thirty-five years ago when I was a graduate student heading to Harvard University. I never made it to Harvard, for I sold everything, so to speak, to walk in the Kingdom. I have no regrets. **What about you? Have you sold it all to get the Kingdom? Is there any area in which you have held back?**

### Day Five

47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

vs. 47&48 – This analogy is similar to the one focusing on the wheat and weeds. This time Jesus used the example of fishing, which would have resonated with the audience, most of whom lived around the Sea of Galilee. Notice here that even though this parable is short, it has one simple lesson. There is a judgment coming and the righteous will be separated from the wicked, the latter being assigned to eternal, fiery judgment.

**What will determine who is assigned where?** It seems that the determining factor will be the person’s relationship with the Kingdom and consequently with the King, Jesus.

God holds all men accountable for their deeds; there is no escaping that fact of existence. The final judgment where people will be assigned to their eternal abode is a fact of Christian doctrine that cannot be denied.

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so (Hebrews 6:1-3).

**How well do you understand the “doctrines” mentioned in the passage from Hebrews above? What are you doing to better comprehend and explain the important aspects of your faith?**

vs. 49&50 – Notice that Jesus acknowledged the reality of angels and was clear on what would happen at the end of the age. These are further indications of Jesus’ divinity, for He spoke with certainty and authority about things that no man could no know. What’s more, these things could not have been revealed to just a prophet, for that prophet could and would not have had any context from which to speak about these things. **What do I mean by that?**

I have never been to outer space, so I could not talk to you about what it’s like on Mars. I could read books and look through a telescope, but that would not enable me to speak about what I had no context or background to know. A Martian, if there were any, could speak authoritatively about Mars because that was his home. I would also have to accept his accounts by faith, since I have not been there, but know that he has.

This is how it was with Jesus. He spoke of what He knew and what He knew, no mere man could know. He was (and is) the Son of God and He spoke of the things of heaven because He was a heavenly man

### Day Six

51 "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. 52 He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." 53 When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. 54 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.

v. 51 – Did they truly understand? I have to take the disciples at their word, but they certainly evidenced enough behavior that would lead us to the opposite conclusion that they did not. I have often said I understood something because I did not want to appear stupid or endure more lectures or explanations. **Do you understand what Jesus is saying to you today? If so, great! If not, what are you prepared to do about it?**

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, [a] get understanding (Proverbs 4:5-7).

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).

We must increase our understanding of who God is and how He wants to express His kingdom in and through us. **What are you doing to increase your understanding?** Two things I am doing are studying more, because I am back in school, and journaling

more, being diligent to record where I am, what I am asking and the answers I am receiving from the Lord.

v. 52 – It seems like Jesus told His disciples that they would draw on their past in Judaism but that they now had new understanding about the kingdom of God to supplement and complement what they already knew. When I read that, I think of the apostle Paul. He had a wealth of understanding of the Old Testament, but he also had tremendous insight into the new covenant. Paul certainly had storerooms of treasure, both old and new, and he freely taught, wrote and ministered out of both.

v. 53 – Jesus was on the move. He had a mission and a short time in which to fulfill it. If I have made one mistake consistently, it has been that I have overstayed my welcome in certain situations. When I sensed something wasn't right, too often I redoubled my efforts to recapture what was gone. When God "moves," as many people want Him to do, then we should also "move" with Him. That means that change and transition is a way of life in the kingdom of God.

Again, I think of the apostle Paul. He was constantly on the move, going here and there in response to the King's direction. Even when he wanted to stay, the Spirit would move Paul on, sometimes by allowing persecution to be the catalyst. I am not insinuating that everyone must physically move around like Paul did, but we must all be willing to do so. **Are you willing to do so?** Be careful how you answer, for that can affect where you live, go to church, where you work and your money.

v. 54 – The people were amazed at Jesus because He had wisdom and power to heal. As I have stated on numerous occasions. He perplexed them because this isn't what they expected from their Messiah. They certainly didn't expect their Messiah to be the Son of God and of course this was the source of Jesus' authority and power. They marveled at Jesus, but He was also a source of confusion and debate as to who exactly He was. That debate is still going on today.

### Day Seven

55 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? 56 Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

vs. 55&56 – While the people were amazed in Jesus' hometown, which would have been Nazareth, they were also offended and a bit put off. They knew Jesus when He was growing up and they were well acquainted with His family. Notice that Jesus had brothers and sisters. This flies in the face of the Catholic doctrine that Jesus was an only child because Mary was a perpetual "virgin."



This teaching came about because Catholics also teach that Mary was sinless, thus Jesus was sinless. If Mary had to be sinless for Jesus to be sinless, then how was Mary sinless? Were her parents sinless? Of course they weren't but the Catholics felt pressure to "defend" and explain how Jesus, a man born of a woman, could be without sin. I have never been anti-Catholic in these studies and I never will. I am just pointing out that Jesus had brothers and sisters, yet that did not detract from the fact that Jesus was sinless.

v. 57 – **I wonder if this is why Jesus relocated his base of operation to Capernaum?**

The people there never knew Him as the local boy, so they could accept Him in His new role as rabbi and itinerate teacher. The residents of Nazareth could not get accustomed to Jesus' new role, and it affected His ability to function. He could do no miraculous works there because they did not believe in Him; they knew Him as Jesus, Mary's boy. We can also now understand what Nathaniel said in John's gospel. The people of Nazareth were a dead group where faith was concerned:

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip (John 1:46).

That may be true in your life as well. People who knew you as you once were can have trouble accepting a new you. That is true for family, church, or a place of employment. This can actually hinder God's work in your life, so that He must relocate or reposition you for you to be effective in the purpose He has for you.

In my former church, I was an administrator. When I wanted to teach and preach, they would and could not let me do so, because I was John the administrator. I had to relocate 500 miles away, where those people never knew me as an administrator, so I could be accepted as a preacher and teacher.

I suppose that is why, in part, God has had me relocate every ten years and why I have had a major purpose transition about every five years. That is so I could grow, or so that the people I was around would allow me to grow – or at least not prevent me from growing. **Are you due for a transition? Is this why you aren't as effective as you could be (because people are trying to hold you in a role you have outgrown)?** I urge you to allow God to position you in or to a place where you will be most effective, where you can embrace the new things in your life that God has for you – and where others can embrace the new you, too.