



# MONDAY 13 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 13:24

### **Plug In...**

This line sets off a series of parables where Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like...

Jump forward to Matthew 13:35. When we take this quote from Psalm 78 and combine it with the earlier quote from Isaiah 6, we learn that parables have a dual function. On the one hand, to the hard-hearted, they conceal and confirm judgement. On the other hand, it reveals truth to those for whom their ears have graciously been unblocked.

### **Chew It Over...**

Quick word on parables. A parable is a story drawn from *everyday life* (eating, sleeping, farming, selling, fishing, rocks, net, fields, birds, seeds, etc.) to convey a truth. The vivid details of everyday life draw you in. Once involved in the story, you suddenly find yourself asking, "Ooh! Is this point relevant to me?" The details of the parable are usually of little importance. Rather, the overall thrust, or main point, is what should grab you by the horns. By way of an exercise, read Luke 16:1-13. This is known as the parable of

*The Unjust Steward.* If all the details were pressed it would be endorsing cheating and dishonesty. See if you can boil that parable down into the main thrust, truth, or lesson.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord that our doctrine of the kingdom will be broadened and deepened as we are privileged to understand how the kingdom appears, operates, grows – what the kingdom of heaven is indeed like.



# TUESDAY 14 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 13:24-30

### **Plug In...**

The climax of this parable comes when the servants ask the farmer, shall we pull up the weeds. He's says "No, you might pull up the wheat". The servants have to defer any pulling up of weeds until the appointed harvest time. [NB: This parable exploits the powerful Old Testament image of 'harvest' – a day of judgement. See Jeremiah 9:21-22 as a potent example, one whereby we get the popular notion of the "Grim Reaper"].

### **Chew It Over...**

Can you think of times throughout history when the church/Christians have not deferred judgement to God and His appointed time? Many people find this legacy a blockage to accepting Christianity. Notice that the Bible critiques Christians. We need explain to people what Jesus thinks of such things in history.

This year we celebrate 500 years since the Protestant Reformation (1517 when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses on the door of the Church). Even the great Reformer of that time John Calvin, probably didn't act on this message from this parable well. You may want

Google Calvin's culpability over a man called Servetus being burnt at the stake for denying the Trinity (note: the details of Calvin's guilt are [disputed](#)).

## **Prayer Suggestion**

In the presence of evil, corruption, even when right alongside of us, ask God for trust in His justice revealed in time, and that as kingdom-people we do not seek revenge, but surprisingly pray for our enemies and do good to them.



## WEDNESDAY 15 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Read: Matthew 13:31-32

#### **Plug In...**

Jesus gives a picture to show movement from small to large. The image of a cosmic tree filling the earth occurs in the Old Testament often. For example, Ezekiel 17:23 speaks of a tree that is so big that every kind of bird will enjoy its shade. Isaiah 27:6 is another occurrence.

#### **Chew It Over...**

Do you think this parable is describing the kingdom quantitatively or qualitatively?

Go to Daniel 4:9-16. If Jesus is employing this tree picture, how so?

#### **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask Jesus to increase our faith that the kingdom will indeed triumph, despite other things looking so dominant.



## THURSDAY 16 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Read: Matthew 13:33

#### **Plug In...**

This is a massive amount of dough. In mass, 60 pounds = 27 kilos. In volume 60 pounds = 39 litres. The contrast is exaggerated, but that's the point.

#### **Chew It Over...**

This little to big parable is like the mustard seed parable. With Jesus telling us this dynamic of the kingdom, what is He doing for us?

Consider what these two little to big parables teach against the truths from the two parables about the field (The Sower; The Wheat and Weeds)?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask each day to for confidence to trust what Jesus says about reality and where things are going. Ask Him to help protect you from seeking protection in other 'powers', distrusting when things look small and stymied.



# FRIDAY 17 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

## Read: Matthew 13:34-35

### **Plug In...**

Before further parables, Matthew takes a moment to say Jesus spoke in parables because as the prophet says God will reveal by parables. Note, Matthew calls the Psalmist a prophet with a message. Psalm 78 says God promises to Israel there will be a time when God's revelation will transform them so they will not be like their rebellious ancestors. Matthew sees this is happening now with Jesus. Jesus is the great parabolic teacher promised in this psalm.

### **Chew It Over...**

Have you noticed that at the start of the Sermon of Parables, Jesus tells His disciples that He speaks in parables to conceal. Here, Matthew says Jesus' reason for parables is to reveal. This shows us that Jesus employing parables is not simply like speaking in code so that a non-believer is baffled: "What on earth is this guy babbling on about, speak English (Aramaic) man!". The point of most parables is generally explicit enough for believer and non-believer (more so if they've listened to them in the flow of the Jesus-story). Many of the Pharisees got a parable's point (e.g. Matthew 21:45). The parables work in such a way that they draw the listener in. At first they are just listening to a story, but then all of a sudden it seizes the listener and they go, "I'm that person". This happens

without the narrator actually saying, “This is you”. It is the claim of the parable that either conceals or reveals. Reject and it conceals (you see but do not actually see – Matthew 13:13). Want to know more, dig in, follow these truths, then more will be given (13:12).

Psalm 78 recounts Israel’s stubborn rejection of God despite all the clear revelation He had given them. The final verses of the psalm promise that in judgement God will bring forth a remnant. However, the history of Israel, depicted in this psalm, begs for something supernatural to occur if this remnant will ever break the vicious cycle.

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask the Lord that He will not stop developing in us a posture of wanting to know more of who Jesus is. To understand His utterances, to listen to the words of His mouth and thus know the way to life, to enter and participate in the kingdom.



## WEEKEND 18-19 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

### Read: Matthew 13:36-43

#### **Plug In...**

Jesus explains the parable. He gives the real way to see the world. There are two sowers, one good, one evil. There are two kingdoms. They are not equally powerful, in fact in the parable proper we see that it is the good sower who allows the existence of the evil kingdom (13:28-30). The book of Daniel is clearly in mind with references to the "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:14) and the promise that the righteous will shine like stars (Daniel 12:2-3).

#### **Chew It Over...**

How we need embrace the way this parable displays the world. Sometimes people have over-emphasised the Devil (i.e. see a demon under every rock). However, have we swung too far the other way and practically demythologised the Devil? This parable makes clear he exists and is active and is on the hunt to destroy human lives. This parable asserts the reality of evil, but says that as powerful as his kingdom is, it is an un-equal power to God's Kingdom.

If we demythologise the Devil, minimise his powerful kingdom force, we lose passion for the gospel and the need for salvation. On the flip side, the trouble with recognising a *powerful* and *evil* kingdom is that we can be driven by fear.

We need this parable. We need the book of Daniel. Both Daniel and Jesus tell us there are two kingdoms. One is beastly and destructive and busy mauling people spiritually. Although powerful, it is not equal in power to the other kingdom. God's kingdom is the most powerful, and the parable shows that even the reality of the evil kingdom is subsumed under God's good kingdom plan.

This truth should give us confidence. Think into what is coming up next week for you. Can you anticipate some flashpoints where the kingdoms clash? What concrete actions can you take with confidence because you know where ultimate power lies?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Again Lord, may we fear you more than any other power. We recognise the opposition, we see that they are powerful. Thank you that the resurrection of Jesus demonstrates your ultimate power over evil. Be with us this coming week as we enter the clash of the kingdoms. May we see our resurrection before us, that whatever happens we will rise and shine like stars.