



MONDAY 20 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 13:44

Plug In...

Notice the description, "In his joy". The man's joy surges from discovering something so valuable. The joy moves him to alter his whole life setup. The joy is so large that the man deems any cost as completely worth it! As someone has said, "this is smart business!".

Chew It Over...

The parable is not asking us to sell everything. For you cannot actually buy the kingdom of heaven. Though finding the kingdom causes decisions. How can you show someone that your whole life changed as a result of entering the kingdom? What real decisions could you reflect on that would demonstrate that you've meant business? What about the kingdom has moved you into large life-changing decisions?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord, may we have the most satisfying joy through knowing we've entered the kingdom. Protect us from banking it all on sub-par, superficial stuff, ambitions, experiences, goals. May this joy be genuine that when we follow your commands – make those life-changing decisions – they are indeed *joyful* responses.



TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 13:45-46

Plug In...

These two little parables show the value and worth of the kingdom. They parade the joy hatched by discovering Jesus and His kingdom. The discovery produces a joy such that any perceived net loss is not regarded as sacrifice or cost.

Chew It Over...

Before any actor in these parables does anything radical, they first *discover* the kingdom and how valuable it is. These two parables reflect back to us a question. How do we evaluate the kingdom? How do we find Jesus and experience Him? Joyfully or begrudgingly? If you are finding the Christian life joyless, it probably is. This is not asking whether we find praying hard sometimes, or telling us that there are sufferings and trials being a Christian. This is a question about joy. Joy still appears in the middle of hardship, suffering, even sadness, for it is something Jesus and the kingdom generates in us because of its immense value.

Rediscover what joy is for the Christian. Look at Paul who altered his whole life given the value of the kingdom. His life had some horrible circumstances, but the kingdom-joy was never snuffed out. Read from Philippians 1:21-26; 2:17-18; 4:4-7.

Sidebar: With all these parables, it is worth asking who in the first instance is the good soil, who is the field buyer, who is the merchant? Who is the one who saw straight, saw the supreme worth of the kingdom and didn't dither? It is not Paul, or anyone else, but Jesus: *For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:2).

Prayer Suggestion

Please God, fix our eyes upon Jesus. Thank you Jesus for pursuing that treasure for us, for we admit we could not bring ourselves to risk it. Now, as we trust Jesus may He perfect our faith, may we see clearly the joy set before us.



WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 13:47-50

Plug In...

These three parables hang together. The word 'again' chains them together. This final parable in the sequence, *The Parable of the Dragnet*, has a time of fishing, then a time of separating. The bad fish – the wicked – will be thrown into the furnace.

[NB: Matthew records the jarring images Jesus used to describe hell: "eternal fire", "furnace", "outer darkness", and here, "the weeping and gnashing of teeth". This final phrase is repeated by Jesus often. It is vivid and sensual. It takes us to some condition people are in which thoroughly disturbs their emotional and physical state. It points to physical pain. It shows emotional/psychological anguish. Weeping and gnashing conflict. Weeping over regret and remorse at missed opportunity and then gnashing and grinding teeth in anger and rage.]

The awful final note about the wicked is a warning, but also a contrast to the fact that there are good fish – the righteous – saved!

Chew It Over...

Given the three parables chain together, how does this final parable flow on from the messages of the first two?

Prayer Suggestion

The Lord has made discovery of the kingdom easy for us and many of those around us. Ask the Lord to enable us and them to not devalue and reject what is right in front of us.



THURSDAY 23 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: [Matthew 13:51](#)

Plug In...

Jesus asked the disciples, "Have you understood these things?". They reply, "Yes". Jesus has spoken in parables, a mechanism which reveals who has ears and who doesn't.

Chew It Over...

Have you understood these parables? Remember, the point of any parable is clear enough, but only some 'understand' by embedding these truths into their lives. One of Matthew's emphases in his gospel is the person who understands these things *does*. Read again the climax of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 7:15-27. Our life actions say lots about whether or not we understand.

Prayer Suggestion

Thank the Lord for providing the perfect righteousness we need before God on the Last Day of Judgement. Ask that God will see the good fruit produced throughout our lives because we have trusted in Jesus for our status before God. May God produce an

abundance of good fruit in our life now, so that they will be exhibits of righteousness on the Last Day; exhibits that we had faith in Jesus, therefore doing the Father's will.



FRIDAY 24 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 13:51-52

Plug In...

The disciples who now understand Jesus' parables, and His teaching, are likened to someone who has a well-stocked house. Interestingly, the category of 'teacher of the law' which in Israel was venerated, Jesus applies to the disciples. This rag-tag of people gathered around Jesus are the true biblical scholars because they understand Jesus' words. In a culture where teachers of the law would be rabbis and have a cluster of followers, Jesus says to the Twelve, they are now rabbis with disciple-making duties. Interestingly, now as rabbis they don't graduate from being disciples. Their rabbi-master is the kingdom of heaven. This could be a euphemism for Jesus, or it could be that the whole broad canvas of the kingdom of heaven which they've heard about is what will define and shape them going forward. (The kingdom of heaven, of course, having Jesus as its focal point and centre of gravity).

Chew It Over...

This concludes Jesus' *Sermon on The Parables of the Kingdom*. Jesus has transformed the disciples into rabbis themselves. This anticipates the Great Commission where Jesus sends them out to make disciples. But these rabbis never cease being disciples of Jesus and the kingdom. It is a domino-effect. Jesus, as He promised to do, makes these followers "fishers of men". They are now disciple-making disciples.

Understanding Jesus' words makes us disciples who have huge gospel-hospitality. Jesus has stocked our house full of supplies by which we can bless others that come near us. We can pass on the truth of the kingdom of heaven and invite them to enter. To *understand* Jesus' words is to be serious about the kingdom. We cannot be serious without being disciple-making disciples. We're fully-stocked, now how serious are we?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank Jesus for including us in His mission. Thank God that there has been a long line of disciple-making disciples throughout history so that we heard of this treasure and how to possess it. Ask the Lord for insight where you can share this understanding of Jesus you have in your neck of the woods.



WEEKEND 25-26 MARCH 2017

SERIES: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 13:52

Plug In...

As Jesus mashes categories (i.e. these lowly fishermen are now considered the learned theologians of the day) He says as teachers of the law they bring out new treasures as well as old. The problem the Pharisees and the generic teachers of the law have is while they claim to know the old Scriptures they deny the new thing that was happening. A new thing which the old spoke of (e.g. Isaiah 43:19).

Matthew himself consistently proclaims outright Jesus did something to *fulfil* the Old Testament. Other times, Matthew shows Jesus Himself saying that He fulfils. The Jesus-theologian (anyone who is a follower of Christ) can bring out the wonder of Jesus, learn about the treasure of Jesus, hear of the kingdom, know what to do with the kingdom by reading their Bible, the word of God, the word of Jesus.

Chew It Over...

How does this work? Consider again Jesus saying He didn't come to abolish the law but to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17). The verb fulfil is the action of terminating. Of something previously announced and anticipated, the verb brings the terminal, the end point, or actuality to fruition. Jesus is saying the Law and the Prophets together are prophetic. They prophesy (announce) and await a fulfilment. Jesus says

that He has fulfilled what they announced. So Jesus is not in opposition to the Old Testament, rather He is in continuity with it. It means some details (like the Sabbath ritual and sacrifices, etc) are no longer kept, because if they are only announcers (prophetic) then their job was a temporary job. Jesus and the kingdom is not 'new' because it is in opposition to the 'old', but because it is the fruition and outgrowth of the old.

It's not hard to miss that the New Testament is briefer than the Old. Its brevity comes from announcing that the new has arrived. While the density of the old is because it spends much more time explaining and building up concepts, categories, and claims with details. This is so that when the 'new' arrives one understands all the meaning behind it. For example, we read in the New Testament of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. There is a whole book, Leviticus, that gives explanation about what that sacrifice is about, why it is necessary, how it works, and how it enables God to draw close to sinners. This book gives all the details of Jesus' sacrifice which description is otherwise compressed in the new. Jesus rather briefly tells us that finally God's patience runs out and there will be a day of "weeping and gnashing of teeth". The old gives us details of how that might look (e.g. stories of judgement, the chapters on curses). Jesus very simply, and maybe at first glance randomly, says the kingdom of heaven is like a tree which allows birds to rest in its shade. The old unpacks at length what that metaphor displays (Daniel 4 & 7).

Read your New Testament, read your Old, read the New again, the Old, the New....the wisdom and treasures of God are yours to find and bring out for others.

|

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for His revelation; for talking to us, showing us, teaching us. Thank God for His Spirit. Thank Jesus that He chose to reveal these things to us in His mercy.