

Bible Stories for Adults

Parables of the Kingdom

Matthew 13

Opening

Gathering: What is your favorite parable and why?

Today's Focus: Jesus used parables to reveal truths about God's heavenly kingdom through earthly stories.

Key Verses: *Jesus spoke ... to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable. 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." Matthew 13:34-35*

Every teacher ... 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. Matthew 13:52

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Jesus' First Year Approach (*Matthew 4:23-25*)

How did Jesus reveal Himself and His Kingdom early in His ministry?

Matthew 4:23-25 = Teaching in synagogues, preaching good news, healing people

How difficult was it for Him to get permission to teach in the synagogues?

Luke 4:15-16 = *Everyone praised Him*, He was invited to preach as a traveling rabbi

How was He received by Jewish leaders early in His ministry?

John 3:1-2 = They could tell He was *a teacher who has come from God*

The Reception Changes (*Matthew 12:14*)

How did this reception change by His second year?

Matthew 12:1-2, 9-10, 13-14 = He challenged their law so they wanted to get rid of Him

How did they explain the great miracles, healings and exorcisms Jesus performed?

Matthew 12:22-24 = His power was from Satan

How did Jesus show He was giving up on trying to reach the Jewish leaders?

Matthew 12:38-39 (25-39) = This wicked generation would not be given a sign

Jesus Changes His Approach (*Matthew 13:1-3, 10-15, 34-35*)

No longer invited to preach in many synagogues, where did Jesus now focus His teaching efforts?

Matthew 13:1-2 = Out in the open with the regular people

How did His style change to reveal His Kingdom to believers but not to those who rejected Him?

Matthew 13:3a = *He told them many things in parables* - first time for parables in NT

Is this really the reason He spoke in parables?

Matthew 13:10-12 = Parables gave the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to believers

Was Jesus purposely hiding the secrets of the kingdom of heaven from those who rejected Him?

Matthew 13:13-15 = No, they hid them from themselves with calloused hearts, shut eyes

How dramatic of a change did Jesus make in His teaching style at this time?

Matthew 13:34-35 (Psalm 78:2) = *He did not say anything to them without using a parable*

How did He make sure His inner circle of apostles understood these secret truths?

Mark 4:33-34 = *When He was alone with His disciples, He explained everything*

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Understanding Jesus' Parables (*Matthew 13:16-17*)

As Christians, is it a simple matter for us to understand these parables?

Matthew 13:16-17 = No, it is a blessing; many have longed to understand

Did the disciples understand the parables when Jesus told them?

Matthew 13:36 = No, they asked Him to explain them

Did they understand them after He explained them?

Matthew 13:51 = They said they did

How can we hope to understand Jesus' parables while others could not?

1 Corinthians 2:7-10a = *God has revealed it to us by His Spirit*

What should we do to better understand God's great mysteries?

Ephesians 1:17-18 = Pray that God may reveal His truths to us so we may understand

What parable did Jesus give to tell us what to do with the understandings God gives us?

Matthew 13:52 = Reveal them to others; Not just new ones, old may be new to others

Six Points on Parables from Barclay

Parables make truth concrete = Pictures are drawn to make abstract and complex truths clear

Matthew 23:27-28 = Don't judge a book by its cover, looks can be deceiving

Parables use here and now to get there and then = Unknown explained by what is known

Revelation 21:18-19a, 21 = Magnificence of heaven described by most precious things

Parables compel interest = People will listen to stories, earthly story with a heavenly meaning

Luke 6:46-49 = Stories of wise and foolish builders to describe building on Jesus

Parables compel the hearer to discover truth for himself = Think it out for yourself

Matthew 21:28-31 = The parable makes the answer clear

Parables conceal truth from those who don't want it = Self-blinded don't get it

John 2:18-21 = Jesus said His destroyed temple (body) would rise after three days

Matthew 26:59-61 = This statement was used as a threat to destroy the new temple

Parables were spoken = They were not written for in-depth analysis, one stabbing truth

Luke 14:31-33 = The cost of being a disciple - not "who is the king, the enemy..."

The Parable of the Kingdom Sower (*Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23*)

What well-known parable does Jesus begin with that begins to explain the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 13:3-8 = Farmer sowing seeds - Many didn't bear fruit, some brought great harvest

How did Jesus conclude this parable that pointed the people toward its meaning?

Matthew 13:9 = *He who has ears, let him hear*; "hear" is used 19 times in Matthew 13

How did Jesus make sure the people understood the connection? = He explained it

Matthew 13:18-23 = When you hear the kingdom's message, take and understand it

Was Jesus describing a political kingdom that would be founded by the promised Messiah?

Luke 17:20-21 = No, *the kingdom of God is within you* as brought by the Messiah

What key point was Jesus making about the kingdom of heaven in this parable?

Matthew 22:14 = *Many are invited, but few are chosen* - many reject the invitation

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The Parable of the Weeds (*Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*)

How did Jesus build on this theme to describe the lives of those in this kingdom?

Matthew 13:24-30 = Told of weeds (tares) that would threaten the wheat

Jesus didn't explain this parable to the crowd. Was it because the message was so obvious?

Matthew 13:36 = No, the disciples were confused - Pushing them to think for selves

What was Jesus trying to say about the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 13:37-43 = Dangers would threaten those in this kingdom, reward at harvest

How did these parables respond to Jesus' encounters with Pharisees earlier that day?

Matthew 12:33-37 = He had pointed out their lack of fruit - they were weeds

Are we to work to uproot weeds of false Christians by shooting holes in their positions?

Matthew 13:29 = No, because our efforts may hurt the growth of other Christians

How are we to keep false Christianity from damaging Christians and their faith?

Matthew 13:7 = Turn the table - make the wheat so strong it chokes the weeds

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (*Matthew 13:31-32*)

What short parable did Jesus give next without any explanation?

Matthew 13:31-32 = Mustard seed growing into large plant

Though not the smallest, Jews referred to the mustard seed when describing something small

Khardah - Mustard plant grew into a tree-like shrub up to 10-20 ft tall

Wide fan-like branches were strong enough for birds to roost in fall

What is the common explanation of the mustard seed parable?

Acts 1:15; 2:41, 47b = The growth of God's kingdom from its small beginnings

What is the understanding of the birds in this explanation?

Ezekiel 17:22-23 (31:6) = People and nations would find rest and shelter in its branches

What is another explanation of the meaning behind the mustard seed?

1 Peter 2:2 = Our faith grows into spiritual maturity

The Parable of the Mustard Weed (*Matthew 13:31-32*)

How do some scholars explain this parable in the context of weeds in the wheat?

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 = Relaxing doctrine for the sake of growth - false growth

Shouldn't we accept everyone who wants to become a member? = keep it pure

Acts 8:9, 18-21 = The Church is not a club or organization, it is Christ's body

Why should we be careful about how the church grows?

Revelation 3:15-16 = Weak doctrine is as bad as false doctrine - produce a harvest

What is the purpose of mentioning the birds under this explanation?

Matthew 13:4, 19 = The birds are Satan and his evil ones finding homes in the church

The Parable of the Leaven (*Matthew 13:33*)

What other short parable did Jesus then give to further His lesson on the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:33 = A little leaven working its way through a large batch of dough

What is the common interpretation of this parable?

1 Thessalonians 5:23 = God's Word & Spirit permeates and transforms Christian & Church

With all other Biblical references to leaven denoting evil, how do some explain this parable?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 = Warning of keeping false doctrines and evil out of the Church

Matthew 16:5-7, 11-12 = Jesus uses yeast to refer to teachings of Pharisees & Sadducees

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The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and Pearl (*Matthew 13:44-46*)

What parables did Jesus give to describe the unmatched value of the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:44-46 = Discovery of great treasure and pearl

What is one view of the meaning behind these parables? = Truth of Jesus is the Treasure

Colossians 2:2-3 = *Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*

Matthew 6:19-21 = *Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven*

What other interpretation is also given? = We are His treasure

Luke 19:10 = We don't seek and find Jesus, He seeks and finds us

What strengthens this explanation?

Revelation 5:9 = He gave everything, including His life, to purchase us

The Parable of the Net (*Matthew 13:47-50*)

What parable did Jesus give to finish this lesson on the Kingdom of Heaven?

Matthew 13:47-48 = Catching all types of fish, sorting them out on shore, not in water

How did He make sure this lesson wouldn't be lost by the Bible scholars?

Matthew 13:49-50 = Though all kinds live in the world, they'll be separated at end

The Parable of the Householder (*Matthew 13:51-52*)

Should we be concerned about differing understandings and insights of Jesus' parables?

Matthew 13:51-52 = No, we should take and reveal what we know and what we learn

How do we know if what we reveal is God's good intention?

Luke 6:43-45 = If we are right with God, we will reveal His fruit

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How often and sincerely do I ask God to help me understand His truths?
(*Matthew 13:36; Psalm 25:4-5; Proverbs 1:7; John 14:26; 16:12-16; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 1:17-18*)
2. When has my heart been hard like the path in the Parable of the Sower?
(*Matthew 13:4, 13-15, 19; Exodus 9:34-35; Psalm 95:8-11; Proverbs 28:14; John 12:37-41; Romans 11:7-10; Hebrews 3:7-19*)
3. When have I responded quickly but temporarily to God's Word like the seed on the rocky soil?
(*Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21; 14:25-31; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1, 14-16; Hebrews 10:23; Jude 24-25*)
4. When has my faith been choked by the worries of this life or by the deceit of wealth like the seed that fell among the thorns?
(*Matthew 13:7, 22; 6:19-34; 19:20-26; Luke 10:38-42; 12:11-12; 12:16-21*)
5. What crops have I produced in response to hearing and receiving God's Word?
(*Matthew 13:8-9, 23; 9:37-38; John 4:35-38; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Galatians 6:7-10*)