

Gospel of Matthew
Chapter 13:1-23
“The Fruit of Salvation”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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As we come to **chapter 13** here in **Matthew’s gospel** we encounter a very important transition.

The Lord’s public ministry really began back in **chapter 5** with the Sermon on the Mount and at that time, and for the majority of the time since, the Lord’s teachings have been pretty straightforward.

But now in **chapter 13** the Lord’s teaching style transitions to what we know as “parables”.

“Parable” is a compound Greek word that comes from combining para (par-ah') with ballo (bal'-lo).

The former meaning ... beside or in proximity with and the later meaning ... to throw or toss.

So, when the Lord speaks in a parable, He’s using a real-life situation or event to throw alongside of the spiritual point He’s making.

This morning’s text is so uniquely intertwined, that I think it’s gonna be better for us to read the whole thing as a package ... then we’ll come back and run over it again for the details.

Verses 1-23: The **first verse** gives us a clue as to why the Lord makes this transition to parables when it says “**That day....**”.

So, this transition took place on the same day as what we read before this ... including the **28th verse of chapter 12** where Jesus says, for the very first time, that “the kingdom of God had come”.

It’s a phrase that conveys the presence of God’s power and in the context of **chapter 12**, it implies a warning to the Jewish, religious leaders.

Another thing that occurred “on that same day” was that the Lord taught extensively on the need for a changed heart rather than just a change of habits and actions.

And ... “on that same day”, the Lord got very serious in **verse 31** ... telling the religious leaders that they were coming very close to sending themselves to Hell by the one unforgivable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit or in other words ... completely rejecting forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Then in **verse 38**, these same religious leaders come to Him and say “**We want to see a sign**”. But in reality, they’d already witnessed sign after sign, so Jesus told them that the next sign they would see would be His resurrection from death.

So, having ministered to the general population over **the first twelve chapters**, we now see Him begin to tighten that circle a bit ... no doubt in preparation for His own departure.

And one of the ways He does that is by teaching in parables ... using symbolism to one degree or another so that not everyone would understand.

And when His disciples ask Him why He was teaching in parables ... He gave them two answers:

- 1.** First, He told them in **verses 11-12** that they’d been granted a special gift for understanding the deeper things of the Lord. And by the way ... that special gift has a name. He’s known as the Holy Spirit of God (**1st Corinthians 1:18 & 2:6; Romans 8:9; Jude 19 & 2nd Corinthians 4:3-6**).

And remember that in **verse 31 of chapter 12** it was the Holy Spirit that Jesus told this group to stop rejecting. And now we begin to see the deeper things of God becoming out of reach for those who continued rejecting.

- 2.** The second reason Jesus gave for speaking in parables is a little more complex. It begins with the passage He quotes from **Isaiah in verses 14 & 15** here ...

It’s a very specific prophecy about the Jewish people of Christ’s day. That they would “See physically, but not spiritually, hear physically, but not spiritually and that they would understand with their minds, but not with their hearts”.

Now let me show you why they wouldn’t understand. We find that in **Romans 11:12** ... which, again ... speaks about the Jews of Christ’s day saying ...

Romans 11:12 Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

Remember that although it was ultimately that Romans who crucified Christ, they only did so at the insistence of the Jews. And had the Jews understood with their hearts ... who Jesus was ... they never would have insisted on His execution.

Q. And had they not crucified Him, where would that leave us as Gentiles? – Lost, with no hope of salvation, which is why Paul says in **Romans**, that the failure of the Jews to recognize Jesus as the Messiah became great riches for the world.

A wonderful example of how the individual books of the Bible harmonize so beautifully with one another; **Isaiah** tells us that the Jews would reject Christ, **Matthew** says they did ... and in **Romans** we're told why! That's the Bible!

Now look again at **verse 17** where Jesus says to His disciples ... that many righteous men and prophets of the Old Testament ... tell of the coming messiah ... but all of them went to their grave without seeing "The kingdom of God" come to earth.

In fact, the writer of **Hebrews** was speaking of the Old Testament saints when he said ...

Hebrews 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Verses 3-9: As Christians we are to be sowers of the seed of the gospel.

Out at our place, we've planted a lot of grass seed over the years. We buy it in 100-pound bags and spread it around liberally. I even get my grandkids involved. I give each of them a bucket of seed and tell them to throw handfuls every place where they don't see grass.

And part of the reason we put so much seed out ... is that, not every seed takes root and grows. In fact, it's a relatively small percentage of all the seed we put out that makes it all the way to maturity.

But those few seeds that do take root and go on to maturity ... do so much more than just turn into a stem of grass. They start doing my job. They begin producing and spreading grass seed all around ... so, in that area ... I no longer have to.

And ... the same is true of the gospel. We're to sow it liberally, but as we do that, we must recognize that a relatively small percentage of what we sow will go on to mature fruitfulness.

Oh ... but when it does! It's glorious for the same reasons the mature grass is. When you plant the seeds of the gospel ... and one little seed really takes root in someone's heart ... they don't just become a more attractive fixture ... they become fruit bearers. They begin spreading handfuls gospel everywhere THEY go.

And that's really the heart of this parable ... "The Parable of the Sower".

But I want to point out a couple of things ... both of them obvious, but sometimes, even the obvious just needs to be verbalized.

1. First ... a farmer (or a sower of seed), doesn't just wake up one morning and say "I think maybe I'll sow today". There's a lot of work accomplished before the planting takes place. As it relates to the gospel ... there are relationships to be developed (otherwise known as tilling to soil)
2. Farmer can't generally get seed planted from their easy chair and we can't plant the gospel from a bed of ease either. Verse 3 says "...[he] went out ...". Meaning that ... we gotta get out there if we're gonna get the planting done. We can't wait for God to bring the field into our living rooms.

And remember that planting seeds isn't limited to a message of salvation. That's certainly important, but don't forget about the person who's accepted the Lord into their heart, but then stagnated for one reason or another. Disciple them!

And lastly, I just want to remind you one more time that no matter how expertly you sow ... not all of the seed you plant will grow. That's not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to sow!

The great English theologian, Charles Spurgeon once said ...

The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it could consist of the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rot. Until we would exhaust our lungs and die. But never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.

 In this parable there are a total of four groups of people based on what happens to the seed sown within them.

Each group hears the Word ... each group has seed planted. Everyone was on an even playing field with one another, just as they're on an even playing field with us.

That matters because buried within this parable is the intent that we each answer the question ...

Q. Which group are you a part of?

1. The first group hears the Word ... but notice with me that this seed of the Word fell "beside" the road (**verses 4 & 19**).

The mental image you should get is a hard-packed path beside a well-traveled road. In fact, it's so hard-packed that the seed dropped on it ... simply can't get its roots into the soil. The Greek word that's translated here as "understand" is [suniemi (soon-ee'-ay-mee)] and it means to comprehend or grasp.

It's like the difference between reading a story and comprehending that story. And most of the time ... the real difference ... is effort.

I think back to junior high and the books I was forced to read and write book reports on. I could read them and still not comprehend anything about them because ... I simply didn't care.

And we saw in the **last chapter** how that can happen to the human heart. How ... by the exercise of our free will ... as we reject the Holy Spirit ... we harden our heart. Sometimes to the point that the seed simply cannot grow there.

And it says that as that seed sits on the surface, unable to penetrate the hard soil of an individual heart ... Satan comes along and quickly devours it.

- 2.** The second group comes from **verses 5-6 as well as 20-21**. This group hears the word and it actually takes root, but the soil is described as being very shallow.

The primary problem being that shallow soil doesn't provide a good water source. And remember that the scripture refers to itself as water (**Ephesians 5:26**). Without the Word of God ... we're all shallow.

This is the person who responds to the Lord with a great deal of emotional zeal. But it's very a short-lived ... because it's based on emotionalism. And emotionalism is not a basis for any solid or deep relationship.

When the heat comes (and heat will come for ALL real Christians) those who've based their Christianity on emotions will quickly wither. We need the water of the Word and the spiritual nutrition that comes from a genuine relationship with the Lord and His people.

Colossians 2:6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

As Christians, we must be well grounded, well rooted and well fed.

- 3.** The third group is described in **verses 7 and 22**. The seed of the Word is scattered, the soil is soft enough for the seed to take root and begin to grow, but the weeds aren't dealt with and as result this plant ceases to be fruitful.

Plants require sunlight to flourish, but if the weeds are bigger than it is, it languishes. And if resources like water and nutrients are being used up by a garden of weeds ... there's little to no chance of genuine fruitfulness.

Jesus says that two weeds in particular are this plant's problem; the lie that money will satisfy you and the lie that this world's approval will make you happy.

The sun and water and nutrients ... they're all there and the plant itself is perfectly capable of taking in those supplies and converting them to fruit, but the lies of this world are allowed to get a chokehold on it and no fruit is produced.

Q. Which begs the question ... what are the weeds in your life? -- What takes a higher priority in your life than ...

Q. The study of God's Word?

Q. Prayer?

Q. Fellowship with other believers?

Q. Service in Christ's name?

Q. Being a strong witness for Jesus?

Q. What are your weeds?

In the first group ... Satan came and snatched the Word away, but in this group, the problem isn't Satan ... at least not directly ... here the real problem is our flesh and its desires. It's us giving in to what our fallen nature wants.

Q. Do you have some weeds that need to be pulled? -- Fruit will always be less than abundant in a weedy garden.

- 4.** Which brings us to the final group. The one we must all desire and strive to be a part of. Look to **verses 8, 9 and 23**. Good seed is planted in good soil. The weeds are pulled and the fruit is abundant.

Q. What fruit? -- Only the Lord knows, but here are some examples ...

Romans 6:22 speaks of the "fruit" of holiness. Changing for God.

Romans 1:13 the "fruit" of soul winning.

Galatians 5 the "fruit" of love and how that's shown unconditionally.

Romans 15 the "fruit" of giving. Money, time, talents.

Colossians 1:10 the "fruit" of good works.

Hebrews 13:15 the "fruit" of praise.

1st John 2:3-4 the "fruit" of obedience.

Q. So ... how's your fruit crop? -- Some a hundred fold, some sixty and some 30.

Conclusion: We're gonna wrap this up a few minutes early this morning because we're

going to celebrate Communion, but before we do that I wanna share with you, a word from the prophet Hosea ...

Hosea 10:12 Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.

Soften your heart and let God's seed grow ... Let God pull the weeds and let Him rain on you and reign over you ... then the fruit will come and with it the abundant joy that only comes from a daily walk with the Lord.