

We are beginning Matthew chapter 13 this morning. Matthew chapter 13 starts the third message in this section. Remember chapters 5 through 25 of Matthew is made up of five messages and their supporting chapters.

The first message was in chapters 5 through 7, The Principles of the Kingdom.

The second message was in Matthew chapter 10, The People of the Kingdom, that would be disciples.

And then thirdly, for today, The Parables of the Kingdom.

The sermon on parables here in chapter 13, as there are a group of parables put together that the Lord presents.

It is interesting that in these three messages we also see a degree of expression from His ministry. In chapters 5 through 7, He revealed the truth authoritatively as to what the truth of God is and what the truth of the Scripture says to everyone. But in Matthew chapter 10 it was a message on discipleship. The message on discipleship was to warn, or teach, those who come to Him about resistance. Is that He will be resisted. They are going to suffer resistance, especially from members of their own family. But as we begin Matthew chapter 13, now we find things that are hidden. First open public ministry, and then expression of resistance - once that revelation is made people begin to resist Christ and the truth of His word. But then thirdly, interesting, as the Lord continues His public ministry, He does it in such a way as to conceal the truth so the people cannot know it. It sounds kind of strange, but it's interesting as we learn from our text today.

In Matthew 13:1-2 we have The Preparation for the Parables found in the circumstances in verses 1 and 2.

### **Now in that day after Jesus came out from the house...**

So the last teaching about the Lord's changes in the dynamic of family was done in a house and people were crowding in the house. And His mother and brothers and sisters were outside of the house, [and they] sent a messenger in to say, "We want to speak with You."

### **In that day after Jesus came out from the house...**

It is interesting that in the Greek text the word *house* has the definite article with it. It is *the house* not just any house. This is the house that Jesus stayed in, in Capernaum in His three years of ministry; and He now comes out of the house after teaching those in the house.

And what He did was, **He was sitting alongside the sea and large crowds were gathered together to Him, so that He had entered into a ship to sit down; and all the crowd had been standing upon the shore.**

So Jesus leaves the house. The crowds follow Him. But the crowds are so numerous that He doesn't have room to stand on the shore of the sea to teach, so He gets into a boat. And He was sitting in the boat ministering these things to the crowds on the seashore.

Matthew 13:3-9 Jesus presents The Parable of the Sower. In verse 3 we have The Contents of the Parable.

**And He spoke to them many things in parables, saying, "Look, the sower went out to sow..."** Two words I want to explain to you.

(1) First of all, the word *parable*. The word *parable* is made up of a compound Greek word **παρά** (para): *alongside of* and **βάλλω** (ballō): *to place or to cast or to throw*. So it literally means to *take something and put it alongside of something else*. In Biblical terms and in application to our text, a parable is placing a spiritual truth alongside of a common event that the common people were aware of. In other words, The Parable of the Sower. I will give you the second word and then we will put it all together.

(2) The word *sower* does not mean that this is somebody who fixes clothes or sews clothes. *Sowing is to scatter or cast seed*. To throw is what sowing means in the text. It comes from the word seed. It is casting or scattering seed. And this is how they did it in those days. They put a bag over their left shoulder with seed inside the bag and with their right hand they would reach into the bag and as they walked along they would just throw and scatter the seed as they went along. They did not have seed spreaders like we do today. But they did it by hand. In fact, if you notice on the website on the picture on the Gospel of Matthew there's a man with a bag scattering seed. That's what he is doing, he is taking the seed. That is why and that helps us explain why some seed lands in a certain area and there is more seed than in other areas, because he is reaching into the bag and he is scattering and throwing the seed out as he goes. He cannot really govern every place that it goes. Sometimes it falls into the rocks. Sometimes it falls into the thorns and weeds and sometimes it falls into the good ground, where he's going to get a crop. So he can't really govern where that seed goes most of the time. So, a *Parable of the Sower* means that Jesus is taking a spiritual truth and placing it alongside of an event that the common people were aware of: the sower going out and sowing his seed. So He's incorporating a spiritual truth into that event so that as He describes the event to the people, they will know what He's talking about and make a connection.

So He says, **"Look the sower went out to sow."**

Verse 4 tells us The Condition of the First Soil. This parable presents four kinds of soil and the soil represents hearts of people; and the condition of those soils represent the conditions of people's hearts. Every person hears, receives, and responds to the Word of God in one of four different ways and all four of those ways are represented in this parable. Whether it is a Bible study group, whether people listen online, whether people are in a church, all groups have all four of these kinds of people in them who are hearing and responding to the Word of God as it is presented.

The condition of the first soil. **"In his sowing,"** that is while he's in the process of casting his seed, **"some of the seed fell alongside the road."**

You say, "Well, he doesn't have very good aim." Again, you remember he is throwing seeds so as he gets near the fence line some of that seed is going to go outside. If you picture in your mind some of these farm roads out here in the country, you have the hard-packed ground right next to the road, that is what this text is talking about. The first soil that has seed fall on it is hard-packed soil, to where the seed cannot penetrate.

**"Some fell alongside the road, and the birds came and devoured them."**

Picked up the seed because the seed is just sitting there. In fact, in gardening we were told after you lay grass seed down to put top dressing on top of it; not only so that it pushes the seed down into the ground and acts as a fertilizer, but also it protects the seed to keep the birds from coming along and just picking the seeds off. It's very frustrating, you throw out or spread thousands of seeds for a new lawn and all of a sudden all these birds converge on it and start eating the seeds because they're exposed. So we put top dressing on top of them to get the top dressing to push the seed down as you water, but also to protect the seed from birds seeing it and eating it.

Verses 5 and 6, The Condition of the Second Soil. **"And others fell upon stony (or rocky) places."** This word for *stony* or *rocky places* means a *foundation stone*. It doesn't mean dirt mixed with rock. It is a foundation stone underneath the dirt.

**"Where it did not have much earth: and immediately the seed sprang up (interesting immediately, that's a bad sign) because it did not have depth of ground: and when the sun rose up, they were scorched; and because it did not have root, it was dried up."**

Right away, before we even get into the meanings of these, the spiritual application of all these, you should have it fixed in your mind that in this second soil the Lord is emphasizing the root system. Not what appears on the top. If you get grass, or if you get a seed and you plant it and the next morning it is two feet tall, you are in trouble. Because the first thing that needs to happen is the root system must develop first. That's why when we plant new grass seed down and put top dressing on it, we encourage people to water, but it's going to take at least 30 days. For first of all to establish itself under the ground, and then begin to grow on top of the ground, so that it supports the blade and the flower on top of the ground. So this is the Lord emphasizing that it is what happens down into your heart that counts.

I find most Christians evaluate their Christianity, or their walk with the Lord, by what's happening on the outside. More than one person over the years has said, "Nothing ever happens in my life. I don't see any miracles happen. The Lord is not doing anything out here for me to see and it makes me feel like I'm not a Christian." All of the work of the Lord happens on the inside, not the outside. The people who are focusing on the outside and flaunting on the outside don't last very long. They wear out and get dried up. The reason why? There is no root. That is why we emphasize so much, and spend so much time in the Word, not physical activities. Why? Because we are involved in developing the root system. So that when the storms come that plant, that seed, and the grass which it produced is going to weather the storm. And it will because of the root system. A tree, you see a large tree and you would think, "Well, that tree would stand up under heavy wind," but in reality, if the root system is shallow, that big tree is going to go over. It is not going to stand against the wind because of how big and strong the tree

is on the outside; it will be because of the root system. So to handle situations, the emphasis is on the root system.

That's why I shake my head in frustration - and I don't mean it in judgment, I mean it because I care - when I see people going through very, very difficult times and their choices are to leave the Word of God in order to take care of other things that have nothing to do with the Lord. You are laying a foundation for you. You are laying a foundation for your children. And I am more aware now than ever, not only because of my own teenage years, but of course, I've raised three of them, and I see how our generation and how the world is today around us. I cringe when people do not make the exposure of their children to the ministry of God's Spirit through His Word as top priority. You will need that when they are teenagers. It is going to be hard enough when that sin nature kicks in as teenagers. It will be the foundation; it will be the root system. When we pull them away from the Word, for whatever the reason, we are pulling them away from the establishment of that foundation and the establishment of that root system. And I say I cringe because I can see it coming. And if we still have telephones in those days, my phone is going to ring, "Boy, Pastor Bill, we are in trouble." And I am going to say, "Yep, I know. It was coming." It is the foundation. You can control their sin nature, but what keeps them is Christ through the root system, through the foundation that they will lay. And we make those choices for ourselves and for them.

In Verse 7, The Third Soil. **"And others fell upon the thorns."** I emphasize to you what the literal translation says: *fell upon the thorns*. The thorns or weeds were already there and established, and this group of seed fell into or upon the thorns.

**"And the thorns sprang up and choked them."** Choked the seed.

Verse 8, The Condition of the Fourth Soil. **"But others fell upon the good ground, and was producing fruit (no hindrances, root system growing) and some produced fruit one hundred times."** That is from one seed, as it grew and matured a hundred seeds fell off of it.

**"Some sixty times, and some thirty times."** Interesting, I want to point out those two things to you:

(1) that one seed produces more than itself. It produces other seeds. The Word of God in one person's life produces the word of God in many, planting the seed.

(2) but also I want to show you that not all people bear fruit the same. For some people it is a hundred times more, other people it is sixty times more, and for other people it is thirty times more. You cannot compare yourself to other people. The Lord will multiply out the influence and the effect of the seed according to His will and according to His purposes.

Verse 9, The Command. **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear,"** is the English text. We have seen this verse before. Literally it is translated *the one having ears to hear, hear*. When the English text says *let him hear*, it sounds like an invitation. But in the Greek text it is a command. So I point out two things to you from this verse:

(1) The condition of the person who's being commanded. The person that is being commanded already has the ability to hear. The one having ears to hear, the one who already does, that has the ability to hear. This in the parable, as we will see as we study its meaning, is the good ground that receives the seed and bears fruit. The ground has the ability to receive the seed and there are no hindrances there.

(2) But notice the second thing, for this person that already has the condition of hearing, that person is commanded to hear. Even though they have the condition to hear, they cannot hear unless the Lord commands them to hear. As we have studied this before the Lord is actually activating their spiritual hearing abilities, for the people who are ready and capable and able to hear.

It takes God's Spirit to open a person's heart to receive and understand God's Word. It is the Lord who must speak God's Word to our hearts. It must be God's Spirit that makes revelation of that truth. God's Spirit and the meaning of God's Word cannot be understood through natural human understanding. Cannot. And I'll get to that in a moment. As you can imagine I have at least one soapbox that I stand on every Sunday morning, so I got that coming up.

In verses 10 to 17, He is now finished giving The Parable of the Sower; but in verses 10 to 17 He presents The Purpose for Parables because of The Curiosity of the Disciples. He's finished now speaking to the general audience this parable.

Verse 10 says, **And when the disciples came to Him, they said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"** I gave you some of the meaning as we went through but He hasn't told the meaning yet, either to the crowd or to the disciples. It is just a parable of a person hearing or receiving seed. And within the parable Jesus emphasized that the soil represented conditions of the hearts of people. But what does that mean? What do the details mean? So they came and said, "Why do You speak in parables? Why don't You just come right out and say."

Verses 11 to 15 - something that we've emphasized over the last few months and I want to emphasize again - Jesus then tells them of The Concealing of the Mysteries of God. The reason why He spoke in parables is to conceal or hide the truth, not to proclaim it. Because the people themselves did not have the soil or the heart to hear. They were resisting and rejecting. So He spoke the truth in parables and made them scratch their heads and walk away, going, "I have no idea what that means." But the disciples came and I want to point something out to you, look at the big picture here. When Jesus commanded that the one having ears to hear, hear, when He gave the command, it was the disciples that came out to Jesus alone, away from the audience of the general crowd out there, and pursue as to why He spoke in parables, and exactly as to what the parable means.

When we get to verse 18, and that will be next week when we actually study the parable itself, Jesus is going to give another command: *Hear the parable of the sower*. That is another command. He is saying it to the disciples, to the ones who sought Him out. That is what

*activating hearing* means. It doesn't mean that you are in the crowd and He gives a command to hear and you are sitting there going, "Oh, I get it. I just got enlightened. I know what the truth is. Hey Fred, did you get it?"

"No."

"Well you are not one of them. Jesus gave the command to hear and I got it."

The command to hear caused the disciples - still not knowing what the parable means - caused them to seek out Jesus; and get personal ministry from Him as to what it all means and how it applies to them. So it is not this mystical enlightenment. Enlightenment can come. But notice that it was not just people in the crowd that all of a sudden *got it*, and the others didn't get it.

The disciples didn't get it either. But they pursued the Lord. They were like the Bereans in Acts chapter 17. Paul would come into town and they would search out the Scriptures to see if what Paul is saying is true. Searching it out. So I want to point that out to you that searching out what Scripture means is part of the hearing process. And as we seek Him out and as we search Him out, He reveals things to us. He reveals to us what the Word says. Part of the seeking out process is gathering together to study around the Word of God.

So even though He gave the parable and the disciples have come with their curiosity saying, "Why do You speak in parables?" He expresses to them that it is His main point to the general audience of the general public is to conceal the mysteries. Notice what verse 11 says, **And when He answered He said unto them, "Because it has been given unto you to know (That is the disciples. To know what? Look what it says,) the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."** To you it has been given to know them.

**"But to those, (the general public) it has not been given for them to know."**

Notice what the truths of God from His Word are called, they are called *mysteries*. In the Greek, let me just summarize, **μυστήριον** (*mustērion*) the word for *mystery*, has to do is something that is concealed that you cannot know unless it's revealed to you. You cannot understand it through education. You cannot understand it through Bible study unless God's Spirit is there to reveal the truth to you. God purposely left His truth in the form of mysteries. But notice that even though we have the Bible that contains the teaching and expression of God's truth, it is still a mystery.

Great conversations this week with people since we shared The Manifesto a couple of weeks ago. We can go to Bible school and get educated. We can have Bible commentaries and read up on what different people think the Bible says. We can choose a teaching that we think is correct or that we agree with. But unless God's Spirit takes the words of the page of this book and reveals the spiritual truth there, you cannot know, it will be a mystery. And let me just say to you things that I've said this week to people, is that to many Christians in church - many if not most, and to many if not most who are in the pulpit, the Word of God is still a mystery. They got educated. They have been educated, but they have not had revealed to them what the spiritual truth is that that text is trying to get across.

We are told in I Corinthians 2:9-16 Paul says, **But just as it has been written, "The eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard," neither have entered up upon the heart of man the**

**things which God hath prepared for the ones that are loving Him.** Human. The eye, the ear hasn't heard, neither has entered upon the heart of man, nothing human can figure out the things of Christ.

**But God has revealed them unto us through His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man (that is *the human*) except the spirit of the man which is in him? even so the things of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.**

Man can't figure it out. Man doesn't know. Only the Spirit of God knows the things of the Spirit of God.

**Now we ourselves have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is come out from God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing (or discerning) spiritual things with spiritual.**

It is all spiritual not educational, not intellectual. It is spiritual. God has put His truth into written form so that God's Spirit can take that written form and transpose that and transform it for us into spiritual truth.

You might say that the Bible is a parable in and of itself. God has taken Spiritual truth and put it alongside of words on a page; something physical, something tangible that we can touch and see. We know how to read, so God put His Spiritual truth into written form so that His Spirit can come along and reveal through the Scriptures what that truth is.

**But the natural man...** The ψυχικός (psuchikos), the psychical man, the person who without the Spirit of God only goes by his psyche.

**...does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: because they are foolishness unto him: neither is he able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned.** They are spiritually understood. Not religiously. Not human logic. Not human reason.

**But the one who is spiritual judges (or discerns) all things, yet he himself is being discerned by no one.** Once you function in the Spirit and according to the Spirit of God's Word, no one is able to judge you. If they try, they will be defeated because of the Spiritual truth that the text might say.

So pointing out to you that at this point in Jesus' ministry, He is exclusive not inclusive. He's not trying to attract people and get a movement going. He does not want a whole bunch of people. He only wants people who want Him; not what He can do for them. I mean would you want Him if you were told that in this life, after this life there is no life after death? That your sins are not forgiven and there is no eternal life? Would you still follow Jesus? Right away I'm sure your response is, "Well, what is the reason?" Because of Jesus. Because of who He is and what He is to me.

As we move on in verse 12 Jesus says, **For whoever has it will be given to him and he will abound; and whoever does not have, even what he has, it will be taken away from him.** This little proverb is applied directly to the Jewish or Hebrew people, the chosen people of Israel. They have been chosen so they have a position with the Lord; but if they reject the Lord that position will be taken away from them. But what about the people who do not have that position? He is speaking about the Gentiles there. Even what a person does not have, it will be given to him and you will have.

Verse 13, **On account of this, I speak to them in parables, because while seeing they do not see; and while hearing they do not hear, neither do they understand.** So I speak in parables so that they won't understand. And the response might be, "Well, if they don't understand then how can you reach them? how can they hear the truth?" Well, they can come to Christ. They can come to the Lord and say, "What does all this mean?"

Verse 14, **And upon them as being fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah,** (these next two verses - Isaiah 6:9-10) **the Scripture that says, "In hearing you will hear, and you should never understand; and while seeing you will see, and you should never perceive. For the heart of this people became fat (that is the literal translation, *heavy, impenetrable*) and with their ears they heard heavily, and with their eyes they closed; that they should not see with their eyes and with the ears they should hear, and with the heart they should understand, and they should turn, and I should heal them."** Interesting the Lord saying, "I've done all this to conceal it from them so they will not turn to Me and I would heal them." Jesus Himself saying, "I made it so that I do not heal them." They do not want to know the truth. They do not want to follow Christ.

So Verses 16 and 17, The Comprehension of the Mysteries. We have seen The Concealing of the of the Mysteries, and Jesus said, "But for you is to know, but not to them." Now He is back to them.

**But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and blessed are your ears, because they hear.** And again, the word *blessed*, **μακάριος** (makarios) has to do with *experiencing the fullness of something*. In this case the fullness of the Spirit of God. Blessed are your eyes, and blessed are your ears, because you will experience the fullness of God's Spirit revealing and ministering through His truth to you.

Verse 17, our final verse for today, **For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous people desire to see what things that you see, and did not see them; and to hear what things you hear, and they did not hear them.** I don't think we can appreciate the fact that if God's Spirit out of His mercy and out of His grace by His spirit enlightens us, and opens the meaning of the Word of God to us, what a privilege that is.

As I said earlier, many people are in church and they are hearing messages based on Scripture, but it isn't what the Scripture means at all. They are not being ministered to by the truth of the Word. Many, if not most, in the pulpits today do not have the foggiest idea what the Scripture says spiritually. They know what it means within their theological system and within



their denominations and churches, but they don't know what it means spiritually. And so we hear good messages where those in ministry present the text. But when they go to present the application of it, it is called *crossover*. They tell you, "This is everything and it is the truth of God, but here are the ten things you have to do in order to experience this blessing of what God's Word says." But that is not what it says. It does not say, "You have to practice these ten things." It just presents the Lord, who He is and what He does. We are just the recipients. We are learning more each week about who He is and what He does. And less about what we do because we just get in the way.

But there are people - and I received an email this morning, it was very interesting. A man who has gone from church to church for many years, and he says, "I keep hearing sermons but I'm not getting ministered to by God's Spirit through His Word." And there are many people who are out there sitting and going, "Look, I just want the Lord." That is what he said in his email, "I am just looking for the Lord. Minister the Lord to me." **There are many people, prophets and righteous people, that desire to see the things that you see and to hear the things that you hear and they did not hear them.**

In I Peter 1:10-12 it tells us, Peter says, **Concerning salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, these prophets who prophesied concerning the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when the Spirit testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that it was not to them, but unto us they were ministering these things, which are now announced unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you in the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.** He is saying all the prophets of the Old Testament when God's Spirit came upon them to prophesy about the coming of Christ, and all of His sufferings; they went ahead and prophesied and gave what God gave to them but then they were going, "What is this all about?" They did not even understand. They came to God and said, "Who are You talking about? Is for us? No? For people later that we are prophesying all this information." They desired to look into it. What does all this mean and how is this going to wind up and end up?

And so even Jesus says that there are prophets and righteous people that desire to see what you see and to hear what you hear and they did not hear. They were not part of it. He is saying to saying His disciples, "You get to comprehend."

Let's close with prayer.