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# When evidence seems to suggest, “Jesus isn’t the Christ”

## Matthew 13

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**Introduction** Listening and speaking are two basic responsibilities in the Christian life. When evidence seems to suggest that Jesus is not the Christ we are to keep on listening to and speaking about Him.

*Obedying the Word and conveying the Word even when evidence seems to suggest that Jesus is not the King is required, risky and indescribably rewarding. And yet not obeying the Word & conveying the Word is both dangerous and damable.*

This two-part message today (AM & PM services) is to warn you of the dangers of disobedience and woo you with the delights of obedience. The messages today taken from Jesus’ parables in Matthew 13 are to provide:

- Abundance for you (v.12)
- Happiness for you (v.16)
- Insights for you (v.51)
- Training for you (v.52)

However, if you walk away from this morning and evening’s messages not listening to and speaking about the truth concerning the present Kingdom and its King, these messages will stand as a:

- Warning to you (v.9)
- Threat against you (v.15)
- Judgment upon you (v.42)

Because the stakes are this high, please take out your Bibles and turn with me to Matthew 13 in order to pay close attention to the public reading and preaching of God’s word.

Matthew 13 teaches on the present realm of God’s kingdom. The OT taught of the Messiah and that the Messiah must first suffer and then be glorified. But according to Peter, the prophets “inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (see 1Peter 1:11).

Matthew 13 will provide help in understanding the way God is directing redemptive history during the period between Christ’s sufferings at his first coming and the subsequent glories when He returns. In other words, Matthew records Jesus’ teaching of the Kingdom in parables to show what will be true for the people of God during the time between Jesus’ first coming to suffer and his second coming to be glorified.

The teaching we are about to hear outlines the kind of realm that we live in. It is the kind of realm that the Kingdom of God actually produces. It reflects more of Jesus’ first coming (i.e. the suffering Lamb) than it does his second coming (i.e. the glorious Lion). The teaching objective today is to instruct us on Christ’s parables in order to make known two things.

1. Our responsibilities in this present kingdom (AM message)
2. The circumstances in which we are to carry out these responsibilities (PM message)

To this end, follow along as I read Matt.13:1-23, 51-52. <read text & pray>

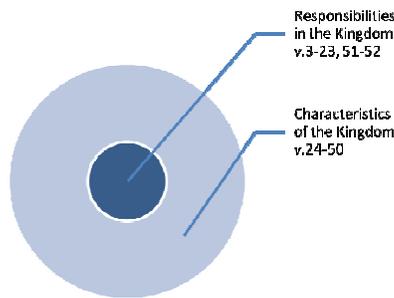
Chapter 13 is striking with its number of parables. Eight amazing analogies of spiritual truth are given by Christ Jesus. This morning we will only look at the first and last parables. The middle six parables will be taken up this evening.

The chapter is organized somewhat plainly. The first parable deals with the responsibility of his hearers (v.3-23): as seed that is sown, they are to grow and be productive (v.3-9; 18-23), though not all who hear will really listen and heed the Word (v.10-17).

Then, six parables about the characteristics of the kingdom are given in rapid succession (v.24-50). Themes of these parables are intertwined to give us a sense of what is real and true for God’s people in His here and now kingdom. We will take up this theme tonight.

The section on parables concludes in v.51-52 by giving the readers another responsibility for those in the kingdom who hear the Word.

And so, this is what today will look like. This morning we will think together over two basic responsibilities of those who hear God’s Word. Then we will go home, get something to eat, rest a bit and come back for the second part of this message. Tonight we will think together over the characteristics of the kingdom. What ought to be our expectations as we carry out our responsibilities as citizens of God’s kingdom?



Let’s get started by noticing the first responsibility we have in the kingdom as seen in v.1-23.

## The First Responsibility

**v.1-23**

### The Parable of the soils

**v.1-9**

In v.1-2 we come to the setting of the parables. The crowds are gathering around Jesus. Jesus will tell them in a parable the importance of understanding God’s Word.

In v.3-9 we have Jesus using a common experience of his day to communicate something of His kingdom. We have a farmer sowing seed. We have four types of soils on which the seed fell. We have a variety of results with respect to the seed. And then we have Jesus ending his parable with the statement, “He who has ears, let him hear.” (9) What did He mean? What is necessary for hearing and understanding the parables?

## **The Purpose of the parables**

**v.10-17**

In v.10-17 the disciples asked him the purpose for speaking in parables. Jesus gave them the reason. At the center of this paragraph is the focus of Jesus' answer. Notice that Jesus quotes Isa.6:9, 10. These verses highlight the Israelites' root problem in the days of Isaiah. Jesus sees in his day the same issue and applies it to the disciples' question. V.15 gives the answer to the purpose of the parables.

The crowd, by and large, had hard hearts. Though they gathered around Jesus hoping for something, they could not understand Him. Because they would not carefully listen to His words, they could not see who he was; namely, the Messiah who had come to bring salvation to God's people. The reason Jesus told the parables was to hide the truth from those who did not want to hear the truth and bow to Jesus as the Messiah. They were hoping for a different type of King; One who would provide swift deliverance from the earthly evils and enemies. God's plan of redemption was entirely different from their desires. Consequently, when they heard Jesus speak in parables, they did not pursue explanation. They simply did not understand...and that was okay with them.

<Illustration> The parables are like the tough outer skin of a sweet and juicy orange that keeps the fruit for the diligent but keeps it from the apathetic.

Unlike the hard-hearted crowd who were apathetic toward understanding, the disciples were blessed by God and were in the rich legacy of many prophets and righteous people who longed for the day when the Messiah would come. The disciples were given the desire and ability to hear and obey Jesus' words (v.11). And when they did not understand something, they diligently sought answers from Jesus as seen in verse 36.

## **The Explanation of the parable**

**v.18-23**

Seeing this God-given desire to understand, Jesus in verses 18-23 began to explain the parable of the soils. Why do God's people in Christ's present kingdom need to be vigilant? What are dangers that need to be avoided?

### **Its three elements**

Notice first the parable's three elements.

#### **sower, seed and soils**

The plot to this parable has three elements. First we see that in each scenario there is a sower. Oddly enough, Jesus does not explain who this is. We assume that it is the Christ and his people but it is not said. The reason for this is simple. The parable is not about preaching. It is about hearing. Jesus simply says that there is a sower.

The second element to the story is the seed. He identifies it as "the word of the Kingdom" (19). It is the message of the realm and rule of the King. It is the Word of God. It is the gospel.

The third element in the story is the soils. Here is where we find the action. The variable in the parable is the types of soils. It is seen as either hard or shallow or thorn-invested or fertile. The kinds of soils represent the types of responses people have toward the message of the Bible. The only soil he commends is the fourth and final one; the good soil. It is the only one that is able to hear, understand and obey. It is the only one that produced fruit; some hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty.

## **Its three environments**

### **Devouring, scorching and choking**

Next we look at the three environments. The environment is quite dangerous. It is described as devouring, scorching and choking.

Jesus unfolds the analogy by saying that there is an enemy in Christ's Kingdom (cf. v.41) that yearns to devour the message of the kingdom. He makes plain that when the Bible is preached it is preached within enemy territory. According to Jesus' explanation, those who hear the Word but do not understand (and do not care to seek out the explanation; cf. v.10,11,36) are experiencing the devastating effects of the enemy.

Now these devastating effects have a range. They can appear as simply not understanding and with no desire for explanation. They can appear as giving up because obedience to Christ is too hard. Devastating effects can also look like being so overwhelmed with cares and desires for wealth that they too are stopped short.

The only soil that is much-admired is the one who hears the Word, understands it and obeys with endurance. Hearts and lives change when the heart is fertile and receives the Word preached with desire to apply and obey.

## **Principlizing and applying the parable of the soils**

So far we have stayed at the observation and interpretation levels. We have seen that this parable is about hearing the Word. We've noticed that to hear the Word in an obeying way God must give the desire and ability to do so. This desire and ability to understand the Bible in a heart-changing, life-guiding way is seen in the context of spiritual warfare. Much is at stake each time the Bible is preached. There is a marauding enemy and there is much temptation in this present realm and rule of Christ; the realm in which we live.

So let's ask the question "What does all this mean for me"? How does this apply to my life and the life of Clearcreek Chapel?

### **The Big Idea**

To press this message upon our hearts here is the big idea of the parable. Keeping in mind that the parable is a warning, we can hear God through his word say:

*Be on guard over how you listen to and obey the Bible.*

### **Basic application**

To be on our guard over how we listen to and obey the Bible, the parable gives us three dangers to avoid / three heart issues to avoid &/or from which to repent.

#### **Heart issue #1 Apathy toward Understanding**

Notice v.19 and then notice v.23. In part, the parable is about the necessity to understand. As I thought about this emphasis and noticed v.15 and how hearts grow dull, I began to see why the disciples came to Jesus in v.10,36 to ask for explanation. The disciples, according to v.11, were given the desire and ability to understand. The proof that they were given this is the fact that they cared about truth. They went to Jesus with questions. They queried the King until they got insight.

We are told to take care over how we listen to and obey the Bible. The warning we are to hear applies to us. When we listen to a message preached, have no idea over the meaning and application, and then say, "oh well" we are in danger. We are in enemy territory. The devouring devil wants to see ignorance in congregations. If we are apathetic toward understanding we are experiencing the devastating effects of the enemy. Remember: *Be on your guard over how you listen to and obey the Bible.*

### **Heart issue #2 Craving for Comfort**

The second danger we come across in this parable is described as hearing the Word but not persevering through difficulties. Again, we see spiritual warfare around this response. Jesus talks about why this person fails to endure. He falls away due to difficulties brought on because of obeying the Word.

As I thought over this danger, it occurred to me that in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Rome didn't care much about people following Jesus. They did not believe that Jesus was resurrected and was the Christ. And so, if Christians were good citizens of the Roman Empire and contributed to the peace of the empire, Rome would not persecute them. However, if the Christians took the Word of God to heart and really desired to live out Christ's present Kingdom on earth, much persecution would take place.

I believe that if we are to *be on our guard over how we listen to and obey the Bible*, we must be aware of heart issue #2 Craving for Comfort. If we are pre-occupied with safety and wellbeing to the extent that we will disobey the Word for comfort, we are in danger of being seared by the scorching heat of Satan.

### **Heart issue #3 Fretting the Future**

The third and final danger of which we need to be aware is seen in soil number 3. The cares of the world and deceitfulness of riches have on someone listening to the Bible preached a choking effect.

Now interestingly, Jesus talked about these two characteristics together earlier in his teaching. You will find them in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matt.6:19-34 he warned his disciples about the danger of loving money and fretting over the future. The way Jesus connects these concerns in v.25 leads me to believe that he is talking about one thing. That is, when we serve money we think that it will secure our future. As a result, we will despise God, desire money and then be anxious over our future funds. On the other hand, when we serve God we think that He will care for our future. As a result, we will be devoted to God, desire obedience to Him and then be at peace with our future.

This leads me to the conclusion that soil #3 is all about the danger of fretting over the future because our devotion is misplaced; off of God and on to the deceitfulness of riches. If we are to *be on our guard over how we listen to and obey the Bible*, we must be aware of heart issue #3 Fretting over Future.

This wraps up the teaching on the first parable. Was that helpful? Can you see the basic warning we are all to take to heart? Can you notice in your life the three heart issues you need to avoid? Shake your heads yes if you understand these things.

## The Second Responsibility

v.51-52

We are ready then to notice the second responsibility found in Matthew 13. It can be seen in the last parable known as the parable of the master of the house; v.51-52

### The Parable of the master of the house

v.51-52

The parable of the master of the house is plain. Jesus commends his disciples who understand the parables as scribes trained for the kingdom of heaven. Remember that Scribes were known for their responsibility to preserve the Law and the ability to teach the Law. Jesus said in effect that because you are learning you now must be teaching. You have been receiving, now you must be giving.

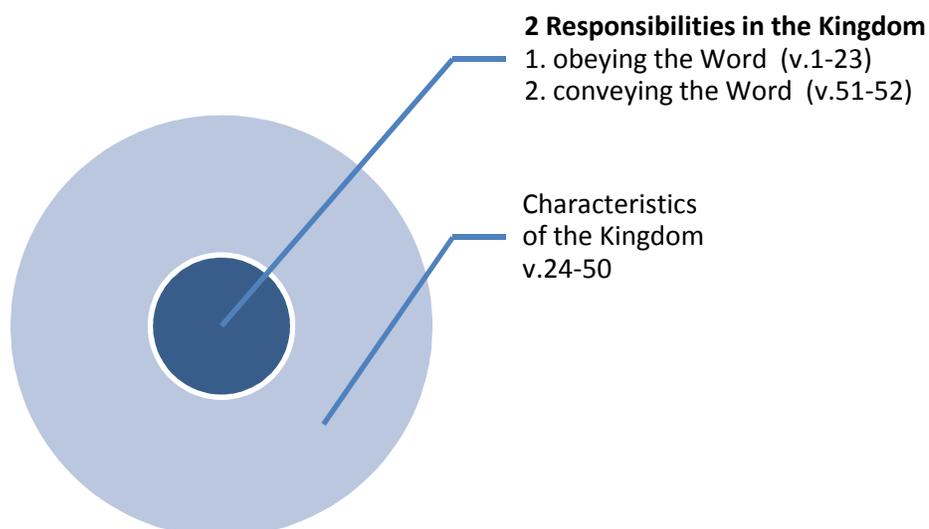
Jesus likens his disciples to an owner of an estate. This owner has but one piece of furniture. It is a treasure chest. The master of this house is depicted as a generous man who stored up much so that he could bring out of his treasure much; that which is new and that which is old.

### The application of the parable

Jesus is telling his disciples and is telling us that we do have a responsibility; not merely to hear the Word carefully but to speak the Word correctly. Bringing in the gems of the Bible has others in mind. You know, laying up has to do with laying out. We are to grow in understanding so that others might be blessed by our speaking.

If we are hearing the Word today we must hear the Lord say: “Do not be not sponges at Clearcreek Chapel but rather be scribes. Be not takers but teachers. When you learn something learn to teach someone.

The second responsibility I see in Matthew 13 for God’s people in God’s present kingdom is found here. We must become convinced of the importance of speaking the Word. Listening and speaking are the responsibilities we’ve been talking about this morning. Obeying the Word and Conveying the Word are what we are to regard from this message. Tonight, we will look at the remaining six parables in order to see the context in which we are to carry out these two responsibilities.



**Conclusion** I will bring this message to close by reminding us that:

**Hearing the Word occurs in the context of spiritual warfare.**

**Therefore, be on guard over how you listen to and obey the Bible.**

**Obedying and conveying the Word are responsibilities of all believers.**

**Therefore, from the Bible learn much, apply much and share much.**