

# Bob Sinclair: Matthew 13

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[ 0 : 00 ] I'd like it to turn once again to the Gospel of Matthew and in chapter 13, in reading at verse 24.

Matthew 13 at verse 24. He put another parable before them saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But while his men were sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

As we look at the beginning of this chapter, we see that the Lord is beginning on a series of parables. In the Gospels there are more than two dozen parables, perhaps even three dozen or more.

But here in the Gospel of Matthew you have to read all the way to chapter 13 before you come to the first one. And then in this particular chapter suddenly you have seven parables all together.

[ 1 : 38 ] And here in the opening words we're told that the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

The crowds were so great that he was forced to get into a boat and sat down and the crowd stood on the beach and he taught them using parables.

We're told later on in that first part that verse 10, the purpose of parables is that the parables are meant for those who are of the kingdom and to those who will be given understanding by the Holy Spirit.

And for those who get understanding, and the word understanding, I try to emphasize and is used quite often throughout this chapter, is the means by which the Lord infuses His truth into our understanding.

Now preachers down through the years have said the truth of God's word makes its first impact upon our minds and our understanding.

[ 3 : 00 ] And as it's filtered through that particular avenue, so it reaches our hearts. And so sometimes the phrase understanding and heart are used interchangeably, but they mean virtually the same thing, that you understand with your heart.

It's a spiritual understanding and if you do understand with your heart, well you're blessed. If you do not understand what is being said in the scriptures or from pulpits, your first duty is to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to give you the Holy Spirit so you can understand.

It is always good to come to the means of grace, to be under the word of God, but you must be able to understand it.

You must be able to understand the spiritual importance of what is being said or you will sit through these services. Little folding of the arms, a closing of the eyes and nodding the head and you will go out not knowing what type of person that the scripture is trying to tell you you are.

And so that's why the understanding is so important. That's why we are asked to try and understand what is being said and why I read that verse 31 out of its context, the Lord said to them, do you understand all these things?

[ 4 : 29 ] And the disciples say yes. And they say yes because they have been his disciples, they have been with him for a fair length of time already and they are beginning to see the importance of what's being said and the crux of the matter.

That the life in this world is not the important thing. It's the life in the world to come and that is of prime importance. And so as we look at these parables here, second, third and fourth parables, that we will try and understand.

The first parable, the parable, the soul and the soil, really talks about the instigation, the installation of the kingdom of God.

That's how the kingdom is set up, a soul goes out to the soil and he plants seed. Some on pavements or pathways, some on rocky soils, some on soil with thorns and other in good soil. But that is the beginning of the kingdom. These other parables here are called the parables of the kingdom.

[ 5 : 45 ] Sometimes we speak about the devil's schemes and the way he tries to usurp the Lord's authority and interrupt the pathway of knowledge to those who are hearing what God the Lord is saying.

And so in these parables, we begin to understand some of the ways in which the devil tries to break the pathway between what is being said and what we are to understand.

Now in this gospel, as I said, we have seven parables. And these three, the second, the third and the fourth all speak about the devil's schemes and the devil's strategy to defeat God's kingdom.

The devil is not someone who is of imagination. If we think the devil is of people's imagination, they will come to the understanding that God and Jesus Christ is also of the imagination.

There are only things that people have thought up and interpreted to keep the population in some sort of control. But the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are real.

[ 7 : 08 ] They're concrete. They exist. And to those who want to please him, they must first of all understand that he exists.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, speaking about Enoch, he is told that he pleased God. But to please God, we must believe that he exists, that he is real.

That is a reality that we all have to deal with. And the devil also is a reality we all have to deal with in our lives, to know what the strategies are, to know what he's trying to do to defeat us and to defeat the work of the kingdom.

Nothing of spiritual importance has ever been achieved in this world without difficulty, whether it's in the sphere of human opposition or much more importantly in the sphere of devilish opposition.

Powers of darkness trying to defeat the kingdom and to bring down everything that the Lord Jesus Christ has been sent into this world to establish.

[ 8 : 23 ] And since we have such an enemy, the Lord continually warns us about the strategy the devil is trying to engage in.

Now, the second parable shows the devil, the enemy, sowing unbelievers in God's field.

And the third and fourth parables, the devil using the same strategy, the good seed and the tares is easy to understand.

Come to the third and fourth parable shortly, but this parable of the good seed and the tares, the wheat and the weeds is fairly easy to understand.

Why? Because the Lord himself has told us what it means. The one who sows the seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world in which the Son of Man has come to establish his kingdom.

[ 9 : 27 ] The one who sows the tares of the weeds is the devil. Let me hear the field is the world.

We have to remember the kingdom of God isn't the world. Isn't the world in general, but it consists of those that are spoken of in John 3.16.

God so loved the world that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. So the world that's spoken of here is the same as the whosoever that is spoken of in John 3.16.

God so loved the world that whosoever believes is saved. And so here the whosoever is the world that the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking of in this particular parable.

And as the Lord tells the story, he stresses what the devil is doing in the world, in the place where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, has already sown good seed.

[ 10 : 44 ] The devil is going to raise up people like Christians. So like Christians that even the servants of God, the ministers of the gospel, will not be able to distinguish between those who are Christians and those who are not Christians.

This is part of the devil's strategy. And so this parable suggests initially three things we can look at here.

If the devil is planting his servants amongst the saints, we must always be in our guard. We shouldn't be surprised if the devil's seed appears in the most unexpected of places.

For the devil himself, we're told, can arrive as an angel of light. The devil himself can even come with his wives and with his arrows and so bring discouragement and so disturb the peace of God's church.

And even his servants as servants of righteousness can be confused as to the reality and situation. In fact, the devil in appearing in the most unexpected places can appear as servants of righteousness.

[ 12 : 18 ] The Americans have a phrase, when you're looking for the devil, don't forget to look in the pulpit. Not saying that ministers in general are devilish.

What I'm saying, we all have to be in our guard. We have to test the spirits. We have to test doctrine by the word of God. We have to test what's being said and what's being proclaimed by the scriptures and not by the wisdom of man.

And if someone goes outside the parameters of what the scriptures are saying, then we've got to doubt their calling. We've got to doubt their conversion. We've got to doubt their understanding of what the scripture says and what they're trying to get us to believe and understand.

And so it shouldn't surprise us if some go back from following. If the devil plants some of his people amongst the saints, we shouldn't be surprised if some go back from following.

Remember what the first epistle of John in chapter two, that epistle there read from, that if they were with us, they would have continued with us.

[ 13 : 29 ] But as they have gone back from following with us, they are not of us. And so we have there stated very plainly by the Apostle John, this discovery given for us.

If they had been of Christ, if they'd been really converted, they would have continued. Those who persevere to the end shall be saved and none others.

It's not how we begin. It's how we finish the course that we've been given to run. And so if the devil's planting his servants among true Christians, we've got to be in our guard.

But also the mixed nature of the Christian church is no reason why someone should not come to Christ.

Sometimes unbelievers will say, we're not in the Christian church because the church is full of hypocrites. And that's the judgmental statement in itself.

[ 14 : 34 ] They think somehow they're better than the church and they have no need to be in the church of Christ. But there are deeper reasons why unbelievers don't come to Christ.

They don't want to. They haven't seen the beauty of Christ and the majesty of Christ. They don't want to bow before Him, fall on their knees and worship Him and wonder, love and praise.

They think that's beneath their dignity. They think church is boring. They think coming, sitting under the word of God and listening to sermons is boring.

It has no interest for them. And so that's why unbelievers don't want to come to church. It has no interest for them. I'm sure many of us here have been through that same experience.

At one time, church was boring. We filled our minds with something else. We concentrated on something else to pass the time while we somehow wanted to appear respectable and be here, but really had no interest in what was being said or what was trying to be communicated.

[ 15 : 43 ] Communicated for the good of undying souls. And so the mixed nature of the church is no reason why someone should not come to Christ, should not put their trust in Christ.

See, the Lord never said the Christian church was going to be perfect. He came not to call the righteous, but the unrighteous.

The heavenly physician came not to heal those who are healthy, but the sick. So we have this great work of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ in which he comes to seek and to save the lost.

Not those who know where they are, but seeking to save the lost. Give his life for the many who are sick, the many who are unrighteous.

So they might come to no righteousness and to place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But no one at any time should take comfort in sin.

[ 16 : 53 ] The devil plants a servant among two Christians. The mixed nature of the church should be no reason why someone shouldn't come to Christ, but no one should take comfort in sin.

Isn't that chapter that we read in 1 John? He says, confess your sins. He says, walk in the light, for we have an advocate.

Now John there talks about his own experience of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

That which was from the beginning, that which we have seen and which we have heard and which we have touched, declare we unto you.

And we do this that our joy might be full, the joy of those communicating the truth and the joy of those receiving the truth.

[ 17 : 57 ] We are meant to be a people full of joy because of the great love and the gracious nature of the gospel. The gospel is not something to frighten us.

The gospel is something to calm our views. The gospel is something to bring us to an understanding of the grace and the knowledge that is in Christ Jesus and to bring us to a saving knowledge of that grace.

But the church is not pure. And that's why John says, if you walk in the light, as he is in the light, you have fellowship one with another.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord, will save us from all sin. But confess your sins, that no one of you say that you sin not.

For if you say you do not sin, you are a liar. Don't walk in unregulated sin.

[ 19 : 04 ] But in your unconverted state, you will sin. And when you sin, confess your sin. When you sin, confess your sin and the Lord Jesus Christ will cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

And we have an advocate with the Father that he will plead our case. He will bring our situation before God and he will plead our case and advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous. So the church is not pure. And we can't always judge between the wheat and the tares. The day is coming when a separation will be made.

Remember the chapter 25 of Matthew, the sheep and the goats. Harvest is coming. Wheat will be gathered into barns and the tares will be burnt.

So what we need to do is to be continually examining ourselves. Examining ourselves to see whether we're walking in the light. Examining ourselves to whether we're walking according to the faith.

[ 20 : 19 ] John is not saying examine yourself to see whether you're off the faith. You wouldn't be here unless you were wanting to hear what God the Lord is saying to you to proclaim peace to your souls.

You're here because you want to hear something for your soul. But in that situation, examine yourselves.

Continue to work out what the Lord Jesus Christ has worked into. He's implanted in us a seat of righteousness. He's implanted in us understanding.

And he's implanted in us also a sphere of knowledge. And so we are to test the spirits. We are to walk in the light as God is in the light.

And we are to try to cooperate in the work of sanctification which the Holy Spirit works in us.

[ 21 : 16 ] The work of sanctification is the work of God's Holy Spirit. Whereby he encourages us to turn away from sin and uncleanness and turn towards righteousness and holiness.

It's a work in which we cooperate. It's not all done. It's not somehow let go and let God. It's something we have to do. Struggling against sin and uncleanness.

Struggling for holiness and righteousness. It's a work that we all should be engaged in every day of our life. The flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh for the one is contrary to the other.

And these aren't new truths I'm telling you. They're the truths of scripture. Nothing that I can say is going to be new to you. But hopefully with new questions and new ideas and a different accent you might begin perhaps to listen and to try and delve for yourself into what's being said.

Never what is being said in the pulpit alone is going to be the means of your conversion. The means of your conversion will be the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

[ 22 : 29 ] Prompting you to be into the scriptures, to meditate on what you've heard, to read the scriptures and to ponder what's written in there. And as by the word of God that we are brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then just hear these two parables that we are looking at, want to look at here before I close.

The mustard seed and the leaven, you put another parable before them.

The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed. Now the mustard seed and the leaven or the yeast, they belong together because they explain one another.

It's also significant that these two parables of the mustard seed and the yeast are in between the giving of the parable of the man who sowed good seed and the explanation of it.

So it's all one and there is no break in thought of what's being said. And yet there's an ongoing discussion about what these parables mean.

[ 23 : 49 ] Many people take these parables to mean that Christianity's expansion and growth is a given.

It's going to grow and multiply and fill the whole earth in the same way as perhaps leaven once it begins to work will continue to work on the whole lump until the whole lump is leavened or perhaps the world transformed.

Others by looking at the context of these parables and I'm part of this number, others looking at the context of these parables show that perhaps that there is something different here, it describes the progress of evil in the world, the growing influence of evil as it continues to multiply in the world in which we live.

And we want to go to look around us and see how evil multiplies in every situation. And so looking at these parables in the context of the whole chapter, something very interesting is seen, the growth of a mustard seed into a tree is abnormal.

And the Lord's heroes would have immediately recognized at what the Lord was saying was something abnormal. A mustard seed grows into a mustard bush, not a tree.

[ 25 : 37 ] Then again the birds of the air who rest in the branches are already being identified as evil.

If you go back to the parable of the sower and the seed, the seed that was sown on the pathway, the birds of the air came and plucked them up.

But if you look at verse 19 of that same parable, we're told that it's the evil one who comes and snatches away what is sown.

And so the birds are analogous to evil. And what the Lord here is saying is that the devil in a strategy will try and multiply evil in the world in which we live.

And let's not think that somehow the multiplication or the increase in numbers, the growth in church in a way that's almost abnormal.

[ 26 : 49 ] It does happen in revivals, we know that. It does happen in times, in this congregation, it's happened in the late 30s, early 40s, where people were crowded to get into the church, were standing at the windows trying to be here, what was going on, and such time God does power out his spirit and there is a real worker of evil.

But other times, and sometimes even in the world in which we live today, there is a false spirituality. When people gather in large numbers, perhaps to be entertained, perhaps to be given some novel doctrine, perhaps to be brought to hear something that's new, and people crowd around these places and preachers are applauded and jokes are made, and the serious business of preaching the gospel is not undertaken.

And so we have here this aspect of the birds or this mass of people who are gathering under the tree, the mustard tree, or into a great church, an apostate church, suddenly thinks there's great growth and great fun to be had here.

And also the parable of the yeast. In almost every case in the Old Testament, yeast is not considered good, but bad.

You remember in the feasts, different feasts in the Old Testament, the house would be cleaned, the house owner would take a candle and go into every corner of that house and root out the yeast until it was absolutely and totally clean.

[ 28 : 36 ] It's not meant to be something good, but feasting Jews were exhorted to remove every trace of yeast. And the Lord often told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, or the leaven of Herod, or the leaven of the Sadducees.

And you see, in every situation, it's not good. It's something that's anything but good. And so it's almost impossible to see the Lord using a traditional element of evil as meaning something good.

And so as Christians, we're not only warned against the devil mixing his own people with the church, but also of the blending the world's agenda into the lives of believers.

Now it's going to go a little bit longer, but the time has really gone. I'm going to leave it there. And just once again, emphasize what the Lord has said there in verse 51.

Somebody asks, do you understand all these things? As we leave here, have we understood what's being said? If we haven't, please ask someone else.

[ 29 : 57 ] Please ask someone who has understood. Please ask someone who has grace and someone whose life demonstrates that grace. And ask them to try and explain what perhaps the confused teacher has tried to tell you that they might have understood some of it and be able to

communicate to one another.

Let us then conclude our worship, singing to God's praise, in Psalm 119, verse 33. Applause