

INTRODUCTION

We are continuing our study of Matthew 13.

The parables in this chapter are given in a specific order.

The parable of the soils explains why so many who hear the Gospel never believe in Christ. Assuming the Gospel is preached accurately, the problem is not with the Gospel or the preacher but with the person who hears.

The parable of the weeds in the wheat field explains that there are only two kinds of people in the world, sons of the kingdom and sons of the evil one.

The parables of the mustard seed and leaven explain the growth process of the Kingdom, which is the church in our age. The spread of the Gospel is slow, quiet, and often invisible.

The parables of the treasure in the field and the costly pearl explain the value of the Kingdom. The man or woman whose heart God has opened to believe the Gospel will give up anything to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

This morning we come to the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13:47-50.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be

at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50)

Nets were commonly used for hunting, catching birds, and fishing.

A small fishing net would be dropped into the water from the boat. Weights pulled the net to the lakebed. The fishermen would then pull the net up. It would close, trapping the fish inside. They would bring their catch to the surface and pull the net into the boat.

Large fishing nets, like the one described in this parable, had floats at the top and weights at the bottom. One end would be anchored to the shore. A boat would move in a half-circle, dropping the net as it went until it reached the beach again. Then men would bring the ends of the net together and pull it onshore.

The large fishing nets had floats at the top and weights at the bottom. One end would be attached to the shore. A boat would drag the net out into the water in a semicircle and return to the beach. The two ends would be brought together, and the fish hauled to shore. This is probably the net used in John 21:6 and following, where the disciples caught 153 fish at one time. They could not bring the net into the because of the size of the catch. Peter drew the net to shore; despite being a huge catch, the net did not tear. (John 21:11).

The goal of fishing, of course, is to catch good fish. Bad fish would inevitably be caught in the net as well and had to be separated out. The fishermen didn't separate the bad fish as they moved into the net. They waited until they had pulled the net up on shore and then inspected the catch. They kept the good fish and discarded the

bad fish.

THE EXPLANATION

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50)

Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like this picture.

The catch is all of humanity, from Adam to the very last baby boy or girl to be born.

IS THIS “FISHING FOR MEN”?

Now, Jesus promised to make His disciples “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). That’s a picture of the work they would do in preaching the Gospel. But it’s not evangelism that Jesus describes in this parable. The aim of the Gospel is not to separate out good people from bad people. The aim of the Gospel is to proclaim the miracle of new birth. Since Adam’s fall, every human being has been born a “bad fish.” We can sometimes change our behavior, but we cannot change our nature. The Bible is full of warnings of the judgment to come, the day when the righteous and wicked are separated. But righteousness and wickedness are not grades given to our behavior. They are descriptions of our nature. The Gospel promises a miracle: God has the power to change the nature of a person from wicked to righteous. That brings about an inevitable change in behavior, which makes the change of nature

visible to ourselves and the world.

The parable of the dragnet describes all of mankind, from Adam onward, as being a single catch. When that catch is complete – when the end of the age has come – the day of separation, or the day of judgment, will begin.

THE DAY OF SEPARATION

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50)

The separation of the righteous and the wicked will not happen until the end of the age. Jesus says here that it will be carried out by the holy angels.

Notice the order of things. The angels “will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous.”

The net is the Kingdom of God, and it encompasses all of creation, and especially every single human being.

The earth is Yahweh’s, as well as its fullness,
the world, and those who dwell in it. (Psalm 24:1)

... God most high [is] possessor of heaven and earth. (Genesis 14:19)

If I [Yahweh] were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is Mine, as well as its fullness. (Psalm 50:12)

The heavens are Yours [O Yahweh], the earth also is Yours;
the world and its fullness, You have founded them. (Psalm 89:11)

I [Yahweh] have made the earth, the men, and the animals which are on the face of
the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one
who is right in My eyes. (Jeremiah 27:5)

Behold [says Yahweh], all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of
the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. (Ezekiel 18:4)

What does all of this mean? Everything around you belongs to God. You yourself
belong to God. All of creation is His property. We are living in His Kingdom, but not
everyone is a citizen of that Kingdom. The day is coming when God will clean house,
and those who are not citizens of His Kingdom will be removed.

Jesus tells us the destiny of the wicked: a fiery furnace in which there is weeping
and gnashing of teeth. That phrase describes both emotional and physical torment.

Jesus does not tell us the destiny of the righteous in this passage, but it must be
the opposite of what the wicked will face. The righteous will not face weeping and
gnashing of teeth. No emotional torment. No physical suffering.

Revelation 21:3-4 says “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there
will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.”

Second Corinthians 4:17 speaks of “an eternal weight of glory beyond all
comparison.”

First Peter 4:13 says that “at the revelation of His glory” we “will rejoice with

exultation.”

This can't happen until there the wicked and the righteous are separated. Jesus
will banish those whom He never knew, in spite of their delusion of religious activity
(Matthew 7:21-23). Matthew 25 says that Jesus will separate the wicked and the
righteous like a shepherd separates goats and sheep.

THE CALL TO REPENT IS UNIVERSAL

As these parables have unfolded we have seen that many people will never
believe the Gospel. We've also seen that many will claim to believe it, but their faith
will not be genuine. When trouble or persecution arises they abandon Christ. When
the world they loved and left calls on them, they realize they still love it, and they
abandon Christ. Jesus makes it clear in our passage today that things will not go on
for all eternity like this. One day this age will be brought to an end. The wicked will be
separated from the righteous. Each will enter the eternal state God has assigned to
them.

This being said, there is still a universal call to repentance and faith.

Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:22)

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost. (Isaiah 55:1)

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If
anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. [What does it mean to drink of Jesus?] He

who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes upon Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him, for "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:11-13)

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come. Let the one who wishes receive the water of life without cost. (Revelation 22:17)

All of mankind is commanded to repent and believe. All of mankind is invited to repent and believe. All of mankind is urged to repent and believe. This is the promise of the Gospel. Turn to Jesus and be saved. Come to Him without money or good works, and believe in Jesus, and He will satisfy your soul. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Holy Spirit is proclaiming this message. The church joins Him. Let the one who wishes receive the water of life without cost.

The nature of fallen man is such that he cannot obey or please God in any way. The promise is made, and it is genuine, but the very nature of the wicked keeps them from actually trusting in Christ and calling on His name. This is why we must be born again even to believe. It is not in our fallen nature to submit to God, even when it is in our own best interest,

because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for **it does not subject itself** to the law of God, for **it is not even able** to do so, and those who are in the flesh **are not able to please God**. (Romans 8:7-8)

For the time being God has chosen not to act permanently against the wicked. But the Bible says that God has "set them in slippery places" and "causes them to fall to destruction." They might be fine for a while, but they will "become desolate in a

moment" and be "completely swept away by terrors" (Psalm 73:18-19).

HOPE FOR THE REDEEMED

Our hope is not in our ability to change our own natures, so that we are able to obey God's command to believe in His Son, and trust in Jesus Christ for the rest of our lives. Our hope is that God saves us for His own glory. When He calls us to believe, He gifts us with faith in His Son and causes us to believe. When He calls us to repent of sin, He gifts us with repentance and changes our minds about our sin. No one would be saved without His work of regeneration.

BRINGING IT HOME

PERSONALIZATION

Jesus describes the many thousands of years of human history as a single act of fishing. At the moment Adam sinned a net was cast out and men and women began being gathered. You and I, who are enslaved to time, see that process taking place in slow motion. God, who is outside of time, sees it taking place in one action.

What is the Creator looking for? Those who are His. Those who are His by His election. Those who are His by Jesus' atonement. Those who are His by the Spirit's regeneration.

We can't fully know what it means to have been regenerated; perhaps we will never fully know; at the very least we will never know as God knows. But the more we know about His grace and mercy, the more we love Him. The more we

experience His kindness and correction, the more we surrender to Him. The more we understand of our own lost state, the more grateful we are for the power He has displayed toward us.

I invite and urge you to take time to meditate on His love, His glory, His kindness, His mercy, and His power toward you. It can only deepen your love and worship for Him.

APPROPRIATION