

Various “Kingdom” Parables, Part 2

(Matthew 13)

Introduction

We have been studying some of Jesus’ parables. We’ve learned that parables have two layers of meaning. The first level is just the story itself. The second level is like a secret message. Jesus didn’t always tell his listeners the meaning of His stories because He wanted to challenge them to think a little deeper and search out the hidden meaning. He knew if they did that, they would grow spiritually.

Opening Prayer

Jesus, it is really fun to sit with Your Word and to think about it. I know that You desire for us to dig into these parables and decipher the hidden meaning you have there for us to find. It’s like finding hidden treasure! So, thank You for Your Word. Give us a love for it. Amen.

Memory Verse

He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders, (Mark 4:11)

Lesson

Today we will learn two more parables that teach us about the kingdom of heaven.

Ask: Do you remember where the **Kingdom of Heaven** is – is it someplace far off?

No, it’s right here among us. We joined God’s kingdom the moment we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus’ kingdom is right inside of our own hearts. We believers make up the kingdom of heaven!

Jesus wanted people to know what the kingdom of heaven is like, so he compared it to things that they understood from their everyday lives.

Let’s review what we’ve learned about the kingdom of heaven so far:

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Mustard Seed? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know what can happen when a church grows out of control.

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Leaven? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know what can happen when evil or sin is allowed to remain in a church.

Ask: What did Jesus want us to learn about His kingdom in the Parable of the Hidden Treasure? [Have a child tell the story in their own words.]

He wanted us to know that He loves us so much that He gave everything He had to save our souls.

Let’s dive right into the next parable...

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

This parable is similar to the *Parable of the Hidden Treasure* in that it teaches us God gave everything to save our souls.

Matthew 13:45-46

*“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a **merchant** on the lookout for choice pearls. (46) When he discovered **a pearl of great value**, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*

A *merchant* is like a shop keeper. It’s his business to go out into the market place to buy things to sell in his store. A good merchant is always on the lookout for high quality goods or products.

Ask: Who do you think is the **merchant** in this story? (Jesus)

Ask: Who is the **pearl of great value**? (Me and you!)

We are valuable to God; He says we are righteous and that He loves us with an everlasting love! He thinks you are precious!

Ask: What does it mean that He **sold all that he had** to purchase this valuable pearl?

He gave up his position at the right hand of God in heaven to come to earth to live among mankind. Then He allowed Himself to be sacrificed on the cross to pay for our sins. He purchased our salvation.

Here’s some interesting facts about pearls:

The pearl is the only jewel that is a product of a living organism. All other jewels (diamonds, topazes, and so on) are minerals mined out of stone.

Pearls grow inside of oysters as a result of an irritation when a piece of sand gets inside of its shell.

The **oyster** is a symbol of the world, like the *field* is in the other parables.

An interesting thing to know is that according to the law God gave to Moses, oysters were unclean and the people were forbidden to eat them. Yet, these precious, valuable pearls grow inside of an oyster.

Ask: How is this a picture of the kingdom of heaven?

This is a picture of how you and I, as true believers, live in this wicked world. As we live out our lives as strong Christians in this unclean world, we can be an irritation to the worldly people around us. Worldly people can get upset with us if we let the Holy Spirit guide our thoughts, words, and actions. They might “bully” us for being believers and trying to live our lives in a way that pleases God. They might call us names or make fun of us.

Ask: How are we like a pearl of great value?

If we stay strong in our beliefs and stay faithful to God, it will cause us to grow spiritually to be even more beautiful and valuable in God’s eyes.

The Parable of the Dragnet

This parable is similar to the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* in that it teaches us that there is going to be a day of judgment at the end of time when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.

Matthew 13:47-50

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a fishing net that was thrown into the water and caught fish of every kind. (48) When the net was full, they dragged it up onto the shore, sat down, and sorted the good fish into crates, but threw the bad ones away. (49) That is the way it will be at the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked people from the righteous, (50) throwing the wicked into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

A *dragnet* is a fishing net. Modern day commercial fishermen still use dragnets to catch fish. They throw a big net over the side of a boat and drag it along for a way, then when they pull it back up into the boat it is filled with all sorts of fish, some that are good to eat and some that aren’t, like jelly fish. They keep the good ones and throw the rest back into the sea.

Ask: How is this a picture of the kingdom of heaven?

Just as the sea contains both good and bad fish, so the world has true believers as well as unbelievers. It is not until the fishermen pull in the harvest that they can save the good and throw back the bad.

In this life, we are like one of the fish. We’re to swim around in this world telling others about the Good News of God’s plan of salvation. Our job is to obey God and tell others about His grace and goodness, but we cannot judge who is part of the kingdom of heaven and who is not. This sorting will be done at the end of time by the angels who are much more qualified than we are.

Remember the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares*, the tares were bundled up and thrown into the lake of fire; the good wheat was gathered into the barns which is a type of Heaven (see verse 30).

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us all these parables that tell us about Your kingdom. We know that the kingdom of heaven is right inside of our own hearts. As we learn about Your ways it helps us with our attitudes. We want every thought that we have, every word that we speak, and everything that we do to be pleasing to you, Lord. Help us to remember the lessons we’ve learned. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Learning Centers

Game Center

Pass the Chicken Review Game

For this review game, have all of your students sit in a circle. Randomly ask a student a review question while the chicken is **slowly** passed around the entire circle.

- If the rubber chicken arrives back at the student before they answer, the student will have to go and sit in the middle (chicken coop) of the circle.
- If a student answers correctly, then the chicken is then passed to the next person, and the game repeats.
- If a student doesn’t answer the review question correctly, they can ask the student/s in the chicken coop if they know the right answer. If the chicken coop student is correct, they can re-join the circle and the student who was unsure of the question goes into the chicken coop.

Naturally, consider creating some safety rules since students tend to get rough with the rubber chicken!

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

1. What is a parable? (A true-to-life story designed to teach a spiritual lesson.)
2. Why did Jesus teach people using stories? (Everyone loves stories. Jesus told stories to teach people about the kingdom of God because it got their attention!)
3. What is the **kingdom of heaven**? (All the true believers)
4. Tell me **the Parable of the Pearl of Great Value** in your own words. (A merchant or businessman, like a shop keeper, went on a buying trip and found a pearl of great value. So, he went and sold everything he had so he could buy it. This parable teaches us that God gave everything to save our souls.)
5. Who is the **pearl of great value**? (Us, the church)
6. What interesting fact can you tell me about pearls? (The pearl is the only jewel that is a product of a living creature. Pearls grow inside of an oyster as a result of an irritation when a piece of sand gets inside of its shell.)
7. How are we like the pearl of great value? (As we live out our lives as strong Christians in this unclean, wicked world, we can be an irritation to worldly people around us. But if we stay strong in our beliefs, it will cause us to grow spiritually and to be even more beautiful and valuable in God’s eyes.)
8. Tell me **the Parable of the Dragnet** in your own words. (Some fishermen went out fishing with a dragnet. When they brought in the catch, they put the good fish into containers and threw the bad fish away. Just as the sea contains both good and bad fish, it is not until the fishermen pull in the harvest that they can save the good and throw back the bad. This parable teaches us that there is going to be a day of judgment at the end of time when the angels will separate the righteous from the wicked.)

9. What is a **dragnet**? (A fishing net)
10. What is the end of the age? (At the end of time, Jesus will judge every person that ever lived on earth.)
11. Who will sort out the good fish from the bad? (The angels.)
12. What will happen to the those who have not placed their trust in what Jesus did on the cross? (They will be thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.)

[For more lessons for children, visit
<https://www.freechildrensministrylessons.com>]