



December 6, 2020

“The Kingdom of Heaven”

Matthew 13

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Who is “king” of your life? In Matthew 13, Jesus taught about *“the Kingdom of Heaven,”* where Jesus is king and those who have surrendered their lives to his rule and reign make up the Kingdom of Heaven. “The Kingdom of Heaven” is both a physical kingdom, because heaven is a real place, and it’s a spiritual kingdom, because it’s about God ruling not just in a place but in a person – our hearts and lives. Jesus taught seven parables in this chapter, six of which are specifically about the Kingdom of Heaven. Pastor Gary’s message today is about who can be part of it, what can we learn about this kingdom, how can we be sure that we belong to the kingdom of heaven and that we will enjoy all of the benefits as citizens of that kingdom.

Historical Background

1. What is a parable?
 - a. The Greek word is *parabalé*,¹ which means to throw alongside of something.
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “A parable is the use of an illustration often taken from everyday life thrown alongside a lesson to express a moral truth. And so Jesus [used] parables to supplement a point he [was] trying to make. ... The word parable is found forty-eight times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. ... Often parables are kind of veiled terminology to get the listener to think... It’s a great teaching tool that Jesus often used in communicating and teaching.”

2. The Kingdom of Heaven
 - a. The Gospel of Matthew is the only book in the New Testament in which the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” is used; it’s found more than thirty times in the book.
 - b. The other New Testament Gospels use the phrase “kingdom of God.”

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3850&t=NKJV>

- c. No matter the phrasing, both signify rulership of a kingdom by God.
 - d. The kingdom of heaven is both physical and spiritual.
 - e. Pastor Gary said, "In a broad sense the kingdom of heaven is about God's rule in the hearts and lives of people, and thus, people who have surrendered their hearts and lives to Jesus as king make up the kingdom of heaven. And Jesus enthusiastically calls, welcomes, and invites people to be a part of that kingdom."
 - f. Someone is ruling your life; it's either you or God.
 - g. Pastor Gary said, "When God is king of your life, you surrender to his lead, and you don't just live to please yourself; you live to please God. It is impossible for both you to be king and God to be king. It is one or the other. This is not a co-regency."
3. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.
- a. **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** – *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.' ... Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!' "*
 - b. This is one of the few parables that Jesus interpreted.
 - c. In Jesus' parable there were two sowers or planters, one was himself and the other was the enemy, the devil.
 - d. The field represents the whole world.

- e. At the end of The Age, Jesus will send his angels to separate the wheat (his followers) from the tares (those who are the enemies of God).
- f. The enemies of God will be judged and sent to hell, where they will suffer terrible agony.
- g. The followers of God will enter into their eternal reward.
- h. It's interesting to note that in Israel there is a weed that springs up among the wheat; it's called darnel grass.
 - i. Each is very similar to the other, and the only way to tell the difference is when they reach maturity.
 - ii. In Jesus' parable both grow together until each reaches maturity.
- i. Pastor Gary said, "The righteous and the unrighteous grow up together in the same world, in the same field. We all live together. Believers and non-believers will live together, work together, play sports together, do life together, but there's a big difference between the two that will be realized at harvest time. ... Just because life seems similar now... it seems like the unrighteous are getting away with stuff, but the fact of the matter is that [there] is a day of reckoning for every single one of us... when the righteous will be rewarded and the unrighteous will be eternally judged."

4. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed.

- a. [Matthew 13:31-32](#) - *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.' "*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "Jesus [was] not giving a healthy description of the Church, but a warning of the possible corruption in the Church. ... A mustard seed usually grows into a large bush, never into a tree. ... What [Jesus] was describing was something that had become abnormal, [an] unnatural monstrosity; something that it was not intended to become. ... [The] other important thing to note is that birds are perched in the branches of this tree. ... When it comes to expositional constancy, birds in the Bible are never reflective of something good. They are always symbolic of something evil. So, for people to say that this parable means beautiful birds perched in the branches of this tree [is not biblically correct]. ... A mustard seed does not grow to become a tree. Jesus [was] speaking about some unnatural monstrosity that happens and evil is perched within the branches. There are evil, corrupt things that have found shelter in the tree."
 - i. Expository Constancy
 - 1. Pastor Gary said, "When you look at a term or a word or a phrase in the Bible that is consistently meaning one thing, it doesn't suddenly change and mean something [else]."

2. Jesus' parable found earlier in this chapter demonstrates expositional constancy indicating birds are symbolic of evil.
 - a. **Matthew 13:3, 18-19** – *“Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying; ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ... Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.”*
 - c. Pastor Gary said, “There’s a warning here about the kingdom of heaven, that it will be fraught with corrupt influences, and how we need to be wise and discerning about what has perched in the branches. The liberal Church today that has abandoned the Word of God, that has embraced aberrant lifestyles, that has substituted biblical justice for social justice is nothing more than an evil influence perched in the branches of an overgrown tree that looks nothing like what it was supposed to [look like].”

5. The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven or yeast.
 - a. **Matthew 13:33** – *“Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’ ”*
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “... leaven or yeast is always a picture of sin in the Bible. So, this [was] not a good thing that [Jesus] was talking [about]. Jesus [was] saying that this is a bad thing about how corruption can seep into the kingdom community just like yeast or leaven [works] its way into dough. ... When leaven is allowed to multiply in the Church instead of [being] addressed as sin, it corrupts the Church. ... The Church loses its power and influence when it becomes impure.”

6. Transition
 - a. Pastor Gary said, “The first three parables were warnings about a mixture of good and evil and the potential of corruption to seep into the Church, into the kingdom community if we are not careful. ... The last three parables are about the value that God places on each of us and how he relentlessly pursues us because he wants us to enjoy the kingdom of heaven and all of its wonderful benefits.

7. The Kingdom of Heaven is like hidden treasure.
 - a. **Matthew 13:44** – *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”*

- b. Pastor Gary said, “This is a parable about you and me. ... Some say this is a parable about our pursuit of God and that he is the treasure in the field, but it’s quite the opposite. ... Jesus gave his life; he gave his all to purchase you and me from sin and death. ... God pursued you. God purchased you, and you are that treasure in the field, and he shed his blood to get you! That’s what this parable is about. It’s important for us to understand the value that he places on us. ... [We are the ones worth pursuing because he loved us so much that he gave his very life to pursue us.]”
 - i. Pastor Gary shared a brief account of the Iron Age coin hoard that was found on the British Isle of Jersey in 2020, which set a Guinness World Record.²
 - ii. **Revelation 5:9** - “... for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...”

- 8. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls.
 - a. **Matthew 13:45-46** - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “Again, this has the same meaning as the previous parable. You are valuable to God and worth dying for. ... God is always the initiator; [we] are the responders. He is the one who pursues us. Nobody seeks after [God]. ... [We] are the pearl of great price and Jesus gave his all to get [us].”
 - i. **Romans 3:10-11** - “As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.’ ”
 - ii. Pastor Gary read some of the lyrics to the great Christian hymn *Victory in Jesus*.
 - iii. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

- 9. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea.
 - a. **Matthew 13:47-50** - “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and **gathered some of every kind**, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Emphasis added)
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “[This parable] talks about a day of reckoning and a day of separation. The first parable we looked at was about separating the wheat

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-jersey-38608178>

from the weeds, the righteous from the unrighteous. ... [Jesus used the illustration about] separating good fish from bad fish. ... [It's a picture] of the separation of the righteous and the wicked: the righteous to eternal life, the wicked to eternal punishment. ... This parable reminds us that one day we have to face God. [The] righteous and the unrighteous will not be separated by their good deeds. ... God's goodness is imputed to us by faith in Jesus. It's a relationship with him that makes us 'good,' if you will, in the eyes of God. ... Today in the Sea of Galilee there are [approximately] thirty-five different species of fish. [No one really knows how many different kinds of fish there [were] in Jesus' day], but the analogy is still the same. [Jesus was] making the analogy that the net is cast for every kind of fish in the sea. Jesus died for every kind of person. ... Now, obviously not every person from every tribe, tongue, and nation will be saved. ... The point is that Jesus died for all that all might be saved. ... Please notice that it is never our job to figure out who is saved and who isn't. [The Lord's angels] separate the wheat from the tares, they separate the good fish from the bad fish. ... The kingdom of heaven is open to all who would believe in Jesus and receive him as Lord and Savior."

- i. [2 Peter 3:9](#) - *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*
- ii. [Revelation 5:9](#) - *"... for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood **out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...**"*
(Emphasis added)

Discussion Questions

1. Provide an overview about what a parable is and what the kingdom of heaven is. (See #1 and #2 above)
2. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#). (See #3a above)
3. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the righteous and the unrighteous. (See #3i above)
4. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:31-32](#). (See #4a above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed. (See #4b and #4c above)
6. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:33](#). (See #5a above)

7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the meaning of the parable of leaven or yeast. (See #5b above)
8. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:44](#). (See #7a above)
9. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the meaning of the parable of the hidden treasure. (See #7b above)
10. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:45-46](#). (See #8a above)
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about the meaning of the parable of the priceless pearls. (See #8b above)
12. Read and discuss [Romans 3:10-11](#).
13. Read and discuss [Matthew 13:47-50](#), [2 Peter 3:9](#), and [Revelation 5:9](#). (See #9a above)
14. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about a coming day of reckoning for every person, focusing on the fact that salvation is offered to every person. (See #9b above)
15. How does a better understanding of these parables change the way you live, the way you pray for and minister to those who don't know the Lord?
16. What do you think the Lord would have you do differently?
17. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)