

Do we have ears to hear?

Matthew 13 part 1

This morning we will be starting to look at Matthew 13, and in this chapter Jesus will speak in parables.

- This chapter is basically one parable after another and they will focus on the heart and the kingdom of heaven.

This is obviously an abrupt change from the way He has been teaching. But if we think about Chapters 11 and 12 we can see that there is a big problem in the heart of the Jewish people especially the leaders!

- So Matthew is putting these parables here to show us how Jesus dealt with the problem of the peoples hearts.

Jesus will use the phrase **the kingdom of heaven is like** 6x in this discourse.

- And He will use the phrase He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Twice.

So the obvious question we have to ask ourselves this morning is; do we have ears to hear what Jesus is saying?

- In other words is our heart in the right place?

All of you woke up this morning kind of early on essentially your only day off from work.

- Then you traveled to a building, to listen to a couple of worship songs, then to listen to a man speak, but hopefully for not to long, then we will eat some food and talk with some people?
- Why? Why we do these things?

Every one of us has an answer to the question and the answer can be found inside of our hearts.

- We may look one way on the outside but the real answer can be found in our hearts!

And since the main issue has to do with our heart Jesus is going to spend part of this chapter addressing our hearts.

- And Jesus is basically going to ask us if we have a hard heart, a shallow heart, a crowded heart, or a good heart!

In other words Did we show up with attitude like I don't want to hear anything from anybody I am doing my own thing.

- Did we show up with the attitude like church is nice but it's not really the most important thing in my life.

Did we show up with attitude I can't wait until this over because I have so many other things to do.

- Or did we show up this morning saying Jesus I love you and I want to worship You and Jesus, do You have a word for me this morning?

All of us should have showed up here this morning with the expectation that God has something to say to us.

- ✠ That attitude is a good indication that your heart is in the right place.
- ✠ It's that good soil that wants to hear the word of God and understand it and bring forth much fruit! Amen!

For me: I used to love going to church on Wednesday and Sunday and I would always try to go with the attitude of looking to get a word from the Lord.

Jesus obviously wants our heart to be like that good soil.

- ✠ And hopefully this morning we can see why that is the best heart to have.

I mentioned this last time that so many people think Christianity is all about the don'ts.

- But Christianity is about Jesus capturing our hearts.
- Once Jesus captures our hearts everything else will start to fall into place.
- Once Jesus captures our hearts then we will have ears to hear. Amen!

V1-3 read-slow;

Once again we see here that great multitudes are following Jesus. At this time in His ministry Jesus is still very popular.

Jesus is going to do a couple of different things here.

- ✠ Because the crowd is so large Jesus does something a little different and He hops into a boat and teaches the people from the boat.
- ✠ And because of what is taking place in the people's hearts Jesus is now going to teach in a different style called parables.

The disciple obviously know what a parable is, because they don't ask Jesus to tell them what a parable is but they do ask Him why is He now teaching in parables!

Parable is made up of two words para and ballo.

- Para means to come along side of.
- Ballo: To cast or to throw

A parable is essentially taking a truth and casting it along side of something people readily understand like nature.

✠ In other words taking a Spiritual truth casting along side a natural truth.

Parables have been called “earthly stories with a heavenly meaning.”

✠ Jesus also tells us in v11 that these parables have to do with the mysteries of the Kingdom.

Now what is very interesting about parables is that they either conceal or reveal the information being said.

- And the heart is what determines which it is.
- Those who are listening it becomes clear, those who were not listening it would leave them in darkness.
- And we will see how this plays out in a moment!

Carson said: “Thus the parables spoke to the crowds do not simply convey information, nor mask it, but challenge the hearers.”

Barclay said: the parable *conceals truth from those who are either too lazy to think or too blinded by prejudice to see. It puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the individual.* It *reveals* truth to him who desires truth; it *conceals* truth from him who does not wish to see the truth.”

People will say, I don't know what that parable means?

- Okay now the choice is up to you. If you want to know what it means it will be revealed. If you don't it will be concealed.

Many things: in v3 we need to notice that Matthew says Jesus has many things to say.

- Jesus has so much to say to us and what we need to do is to make sure that we have ears to hear! Amen.
- Jesus will say to the disciples later, that I have many things to say to you but you are unable to hear them now.

How often do we think that the problem in our relationship with Jesus is that He is not saying anything to us?

- But the truth is, the problem is not with Jesus, because He has many things to say to us, but the problem is that we are not in a place where we can hear them.

V4-9 read-slow;

As Jesus is sitting in the boat speaking to the crowds in parables He is using natural things that are very common to the people of that day.

- It could be possible that there could have even been a sower not too far from them that they could have seen while Jesus is speaking to them.

Now Jesus tells them that as the Sower went out and sowed his seed, some of the seed fell on different types of soil.

- The first type of soil was the wayside.
- The second type was in stony places.
- The third fell among the thorns.
- The fourth fell among good soil.

Result: And as we look at this we can see there was some kind of a result in every case.

- And as God said through the Prophet Isaiah, My word shall not return to Me void, but it will accomplish what I please.
- The problem is not with the seed but with soil!

Good soil: Jesus wants the people to hear and understand that there is only one type of soil that will bring forth a crop, and that is good soil. That's it.

- And do we have ears to hear that.
- It sounds kind of exclusive and it is!

Natural: If we were to look at this from a natural stand point and say I want to bring forth a good crop that will give me a great increase.

- Then the obvious thing is that I must have good soil.
- That is the natural truth in this parable and Jesus is going to explain the spiritual truth in a moment!

In the natural realm we would be an idiot to question the fact that good soil is required to bring forth good fruit! Yet in the spiritual realm we question it!

- In the spiritual realm we wrongly think we can bring forth growth no matter what is taking place with the soil!

Missouri: when I was young we used to go to Missouri to see my step-father's family. And out there they had a great big farm.

- Now if I went and spoke to my grandfather or uncle and said I want to plant crops on those rocks over there.

- They would have said, Boy, you must be tapped in the head. Or did the mule kick you in the head this morning?

Challenge: So the challenge that Jesus put out there for us is do we have ears to hear?

- In other words where is our heart?

Hear: Jesus uses the word “hear” 19x in this chapter alone.

- Do we think He is trying to make a point?

Jesus is inviting people to come and here more!

- Please notice: that Jesus’ call to be hearing is interpretive of this parable itself.
- Because the parable pictures the different kind of hearers which the Word finds!
Amen!

Jesus is giving an invitation at this point for those who were serious about following Him, to come to Him, and to ask for an explanation!

- Do we have ears to hear?

V10-13 read-slow;

The disciples now come to Jesus and ask Him why He is now speaking to the people in parables?

The first thing Jesus does is telling them how blessed they are for coming to Him.

- And He also mentions how cursed people are going to be for not coming to Him.

Jesus speaks in parables because it reveals truth or conceals truth.

- And there are blessings and consequences attached to each truth.

And Jesus also tells the disciples it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom.

- So for the disciples the parable was a revealer of truth.

Important: Now some people read this and they get confused or even discouraged because they think that Jesus only revealed what the parables said to the disciples.

- They read because it has been given to you, to mean that it wasn’t given to others.

It wasn’t that Jesus was playing favorites by making known to the disciples the mysteries of the kingdom.

- But the key is found in v10 and this is really the key for the whole section!
- It says the disciples came to Him and asked Him.

If we look back at v2 we see that Jesus was speaking to great multitudes.

- In other words everyone heard what Jesus was saying.

Now the reason the mysteries are being made known to the disciples is because they had ears to hear and they came to Jesus and asked Him.

- See every one heard Jesus and He gave the opportunity for everyone to come and hear, but sadly only a few came!
- For some the parable was a concealer while to others it was a revealer!

The things of God are available to anyone who would come and ask.

- James tells us we have not because we ask not.
- James also tells us that if we want wisdom we need to ask and God will give it to us.
- Jesus said the Father will not turn anyone away that comes to Him.
- Peter tells us that God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness.
- Paul said My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
- We are also told that if God gave us His only begotten Son surely He will give us all things.
- Jesus said, But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you!

More will be given: Also the great thing about Jesus is that not only does He give to us when we come to Him, but the more we have the more we will be given.

- Jesus doesn't say, now that is enough, but rather He says for whoever has to him more will be given!

Elisha: when Elijah was taken away and God asked Elisha what he wanted he said he wanted a double portion of the Spirit of Elijah.

- God didn't say, I can't do that, that's too much, but rather He granted his request.

David: we know that King David was an abundantly blessed man by God.

- Even though God would not let him build the Temple, God did bless him and allow him to pretty much supply everything that was needed to build the Temple.

But after David sinned with Bathsheba we find a very interesting scripture from God when He is talking to David about his sin.

- **2nd Samuel 12:7-8** Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah.

- **And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!**

If we continually go to Jesus and receive from Him, His desire is to keep on giving to us.

- The bible says God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.
- God will add more and more to the faithful people that follow Him.

Results of not coming to Jesus: Jesus also tells us what takes place when people don't have ears to hear and they don't come to Him.

For these people the parable is a concealer and there are consequences when things are concealed.

- The reality is people just can't walk away from Jesus without there being any consequences!

Jesus is speaking to the Jews in particular here though they may have been some Gentiles in the crowd and this truth does apply to them as well.

But the Jews have been given so much by God. They were called to serve God, they were given His commandments, and saw His great works of bringing them into the Promise Land. And now they have the Messiah right in front of them and yet they are rejecting Him.

- So even what they do have will be taken from them.

This same truth applies to the rest of the world as well.

- I have told people that I have witnessed to often that they are responsible for what they heard!
- People have the light of their conscience; they have the creation that declares the glory of God. The majority of people in the world have heard the gospel and yet what they do have will be taken from them.
- In other words their last state will be worse than the first.
- They will end up in hell for all eternity.

Tares and the Dragnet: When Jesus speaks on the parable of the tares and the Dragnet, He makes it very clear that the people that reject Him, will be in a furnace of fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

V13-15 read-slow;

Jesus now explains one of the reasons of why He in parables and why they conceal truth.

• In other words Jesus is no longer going to give truth to those that don't want it. From this time forward Jesus says He is no longer going to speak to the crowds with open truth but rather through parables.

Isaiah prophecy: We have seen from the last two chapters that the Jews for the most part are not in a good place right now and unfortunately were a fulfillment of prophecy but not in a good way.

- I would not want to fulfill prophecy that said I would have a dull heart.
- I would not want Caleb to come to me and say Daddy I was reading in Isaiah this morning about the people that hearts have grown dull.
- Is that speaking about you?

This prophecy of Isaiah was written during a time of sweeping Judgment on Judah.

- During the time of Isaiah Judah refused to listen to the prophets that tried to warn them so God brought judgment upon them with the Babylonian captivity.
- And unfortunately the Jews of Jesus day find themselves right back where they were several hundred years ago.
- The heart of the people has grown dull.

Isaiah describes a people that have lost the heart for God.

- And the real sad thing about this prophecy is that God wants to heal them.
- And because their hearts are dull they are losing out on that healing.

H.C. Wooding said, Because they did not have the love of the truth, they would not get the light of the truth!

Christians: As Christians we need to understand that we are the ones that are losing out when our hearts are not right before God.

- God wants to do a greater work in our hearts, He wants to heal us but we are not seeking after Him.
- If we were to ask the people there if they think their hearts have grown dull they would have most likely answered no.
- Because a dull heart will not know that it is dull, but rather it will think it is all right.

But the sad thing is that there are Christians that have a dull heart and they don't even know it.

- And God so wants to heal them but they just don't seem to get it.

V16-17 read-slow;

Jesus told the disciples that they will be given the mysteries of the kingdom and now Jesus is telling them how privileged they are by receiving these things.

- The disciple's eyes are blessed because they are receiving these mysteries that the great men before them longed to see.

For centuries and millennium's men have sought to see what they are seeing.

- And we are included in this list because we are seeing and hearing what they are.

Isaiah and Jeremiah wrote concerning the Messiah but they never experience and understood what these disciples are seeing and hearing now.

The prophets of old would write prophecies concerning the Messiah and they knew they had wrote something amazing but they didn't fully understand what they were writing.

Jeremiah and Isaiah and the other would say, Thus says the word of the Lord, But the disciples have the word of the Lord standing right in front of them.

John 1:1 says; In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

V18-23 read-slow;

Jesus is now going to explain the first parable that He has given.

- And this is really where the rubber meets the road.

And Mark tells us in his gospel that this parable is the key to all the parables.

Our heart: As Jesus breaks down these four soils for us we can ask ourselves what kind of soil or heart do we think we have?

- Did we show up this morning with a hard heart? A shallow heart? A crowded heart? Or a good heart that has ears to hear what Jesus is saying!

David cried out to go and said, search me and know me, see if there is any wicked way in me?

- We need to be a people that are asking God to search our hearts!

Interpretation: The great thing about Jesus interpreting this parable for us is that we can't disagree with the conclusions.

You may at times listen to something I say, and say "I am not sure I agree with Pastor Bob' interpretation of that text".

- But we can't do that with Jesus.
- So when Jesus says a crowded heart will have the word choked out than that is exactly what is going to happen!

So as we break down this parable it really gives us a great opportunity to examine our heart.

Wondered: If you have ever looked at your life and wondered why you are not growing or really becoming what you want to become in Christ.

- The first three soils will give us an example of why!

Wayside: the first soil is the wayside and this represents the person with the hard heart.

- This is a person whose heart is so hard that when the seed the word of God comes upon it there is no increase whatsoever.
- ✠ These are people are un-teachable.

And it is very sad to think that people would become so hard toward God that they are not in the least bit interested.

We don't know: One of the things we need to realize is that from our perspective we don't really know where people's hearts are.

- ✠ And Jesus will speak about that in the wheat and the tares.
- SO because we don't really know where people's hearts are we need to keep putting the seeds out there.

This week: Just this week I was sharing with someone again whose heart seems to be so hard like the wayside.

- As I was speaking to them they were blaspheming God.
- But a word popped into my mind and I said to this individual when you come to believe in God you will look back and see He was following you all along.
- I said He won't give up on you, and I won't give up on you.

I praise God that He didn't give up on me, and my seemingly hard heart.

V20-21 read-slow;

This is the shallow heart.

- These are people that hear the word and they receive it with joy, yet it doesn't go down to deep into their hearts.
- And because they don't get the word down deep into their hearts it can easily be taken away.

To be a Christian is not a popular thing so when persecution and tribulations start to come they will leave because there was no depth to their faith.

- Its not that they don't think Jesus is good, but He simply isn't as good as being popular or having friends or as being in a sinful relationship!

Spurgeon made a good point: "I want you clearly to understand that the fault did not lie in the suddenness of their supposed conversion. Many sudden conversions have been among the best that have ever happened." The problem was not their sudden growth, but their lack of depth.

No one really wants to go through tribulation or persecution but when we do go through those things it helps us to see if we truly have faith or not.

I think it is a good thing for Christians to go through persecution when they first get saved because it helps them to establish where they are at with Jesus!

V22 read-slow;

This is the person with the crowded heart.

- This person hears the word and it is growing but the problem is they have so many other things growing in their heart as well.

When we are so involved in the cares of this world they can come in and choke out the word of God.

One of the problems with the public schools is that the classrooms are over crowded.

- ✠ And parents complain and rightfully so because their children can't learn in an over crowded classroom.

Proper place: It is not that everything in the word is bad, but we simply need to have things in their proper place!

- If our Christianity is only Sunday at church and the rest of the week we are filling our heart with other things chances are the word will be choked out.

Time frame: We need to notice there is know time frame here.

- I know people that were supposedly walking with the Lord for years but now the word has been choked out.
- And when I look back at their life it is easy to see that cares of this world were very much in their life!
- This means that some people can play Christian for a long time until the word is eventually choked out!

Notice: Jesus says they became unfruitful which implies that at one time they were fruitful!

- When I see Christians that are filling their lives with other things my heart is very concerned for them.

This heart ought to give us a little reality check!

- All of us can look at our lives and look back and see that we were really bearing fruit in our life.
- But if we are not bearing the same type of fruit as we once were it ought to give us reason for concern.

Focus on the family testimony: a number of weeks ago there was a woman on Focus on the family and she was speaking about some of the trouble her and her husband got into.

- Because of different circumstances they stopped going to church.
- For some reason they thought they could make it on their own.
- And she said that turned out to be the biggest mistake of their lives.

God designed the body of Christ in such a way that we need each other.

- I need the body of Christ in my life. We should all be able to admit that!
- If God told me to be a lone ranger Christian then I would do it
- But He didn't He told us to be an active part of the body of Christ.
- And one of the best preventatives for not getting the word choked out is being an active part in the body of Christ!

V23 read-slow;

A good heart will be a blessed heart.

- And God is going to abundantly bless those with a good heart.

I don't know about anyone else in this room but I love the fact that God may bless my life up to a hundred-fold increase. Amen!

Three times: I am not sure if caught on to this but three times in this section Jesus said those with a good heart would be blessed.

- V12 for whoever has, to him, more will be given and he will have abundance.
- V16 Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear.
- V23 which we just read.

Understands: These are the people that willingly receive the word of God and they seek to understand it!

- We can't ignore the fact that Jesus says they understand it!!!

This doesn't mean we have to go to seminary or we have to become theologians.

- But we are simply giving an effort to try and understand what the word of God says.

Disciples: And this section started out with the disciples going to Jesus and asking Him about the parables.

- In other words they sought to understand what the word of God means! Amen!

That is precisely why we need to be reading, meditating, memorizing, and studying!

- Understanding equals blessing. Amen!

That is why we here at this church give such a premium on helping the body to understand the word of God.

- I'm not here to be flashy or charismatic or to make you laugh, or to be a motivational speaker or even to make us feel good about ourselves, though those things can have their place.

Jesus told Peter to feed My sheep.

- Paul told Timothy to study the word and to Preach the word.
- In Acts the twelve Apostles stated that they were to give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word!
- Later in Act when Paul was exhorting the Elders in Ephesus, he said I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give and inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

My primary role is to give the best effort I can possibly give, in order for everyone to understand what the word of God says! Amen!

- Because Jesus says the result of understanding the word of God will be a very blessed and fruitful life!

There is no doubt that all of us in this room desire to live a blessed and fruitful life.

- If we want our life to be blessed we need to make sure have the word in our heart and that our heart is in the right place!

There are two things necessary to bring forth fruit, the seed and the good soil.

✝ God's word is the good seed.

✝ And our part is to make sure that our heart is good!

✝ Amen!

Let's pray!