

## **Text: Matthew 13**

### **Title: “The Kingdom’s Operation”**

Let’s open our Bibles today to Matthew 13. We’re in this series “Kingdom Come” and we’re wanting to discover what Jesus had in mind when He taught us to pray to the Father, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” It’s not just about wanting Jesus to come again to establish His eternal kingdom. It’s about wanting the will of the Father to be done in my life here on earth now. We want to know what it means to obey Jesus when He said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

If you’re having trouble wrapping your brain around this invisible Kingdom we’ve been studying you’re not alone. In fact, Jesus’ first disciples struggled with it as well. So Jesus took extra time to explain it to them ... to paint them a picture to give them a vision of what exactly this Kingdom of God is all about. Let’s start in...

**Matthew 13:2-3a - Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables...**

A parable is a teaching tool that Jesus used all the time. The word means to “cast alongside.” Jesus would take an important concept or truth and cast alongside it something from everyday life that would cause those listening to think, “Oh, I get it.” Here in Matthew 13 Jesus uses eight parables to help His disciples understand how the Kingdom of God operates in their lives and in their world. And the disciples are puzzled about this so they ask Jesus why He teaches with parables. His answer...

**Matthew 13:11 - “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.**

Jesus knows that there are some who are listening because they are hungry for truth and there are some who are listening just to find something criticize about Jesus. So the parables are intended to *reveal* truth to some and to *conceal* truth from others. So we need Jesus to teach us the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. That word “secrets” in the language Jesus spoke sounds very much like our word “mystery.” Yes, the Kingdom of God is mysterious. It can only be understood by revelation. Jesus does that by teaching them with parables.

So here in this cluster of parables in Matthew 13 you hear Jesus repeatedly say, “The kingdom of heaven is like...” I’ll refer back to some of these parables in a moment, but in vv.51-52 Jesus ties them all together with a final parable and that’s the one I will focus on this morning. **Read Matthew 13:51-52.**

**PHOTO ILLUSTRATION** –Have you been keeping up with the great debate that has been going on in our state? It has nothing to do with politics, or the border wall, or the Confederate statues around the state. It’s a debate about the most popular fast food hamburger in the state. It used to be Whataburger, but now the scales are tipped toward In-N-Out Burger. How many of you are Whataburger fans? How about In-N-Out Burger fans?

Well, there’s an “In-N-Out” operation to the Kingdom of God. In its operation it flows in and it flows out. It works in and it works out. Jesus talks about those who are IN-structed who then bring OUT something. So the Kingdom of God operates through transformed followers of Jesus who then penetrate the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Notice first...

## **1. THE INWARD OPERATION OF THE KINGDOM**

Jesus has been teaching on the Kingdom and now He gives them a kind of final exam. In v.51 Jesus quizzed them, “Have you understood all these things?” And they replied, “Uh, yes.” I’m not sure they were being completely truthful, but they knew by now that they *should* understand.

Jesus has taken some considerable time teaching His followers on this subject. He starts out on the shore of the Sea (Lake) of Galilee, teaching out of a boat because the crowds are so large. But then He leaves the crowds and goes into a nearby house to continue the conversation just with His disciples. Jesus is concerned that these truths get to His disciples in a way that will shape their lives. So the inward operation of the Kingdom is...

## **INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION**

Jesus has already illustrated this in the first parable in Matthew 13. He likens the Kingdom’s inward operation to a farmer sowing seed into the soil that will hopefully produce a harvest or fruit. And there are different kinds of soil the seed falls on ... hard soil, shallow soil, weed-infested soil and then good soil. And Jesus explains it for them. **Read Matthew 13:18-19.**

So this seed Jesus is talking about is the message of the Kingdom ... the message that the Kingdom of God has come and that we must repent and believe if we are to enter it. And that message is received in different ways. For some it isn't received at all. It never has a chance to get in them because their hearts are hard. Satan snatches the seed away. And then there are those who take the message of God's Kingdom into their lives, but it doesn't go very deep and when life gets hard they just give up. There's no fruit. And there are those whose hearts are so crowded with other affections that the Kingdom can't hardly compete. Any fruit is choked out by all these other affections. But then there are the ones who take the message of the Kingdom into their hearts and it transforms their life and they produce the fruit of Christlikeness and eternal life. Again, the inward operation of the Kingdom is...

### **INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION**

It starts with grasping the message of the Kingdom so well that you can stack your whole life on it. Now Jesus goes into the last of the parables here in Matthew 13. Here's the image...

**Matthew 13:52a - He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven..."**

He says, "Therefore..." In light of all He has taught them about the Kingdom of God, this is how it works in real life.

By the way, the word for "instructed" is the verb form of the word most commonly translated "disciple." Jesus is talking here about discipleship ... being instructed about how the Kingdom of God operates in my life as a follower, a disciple, of Jesus Christ. So the Kingdom citizen is simply the life of a follower of Jesus ... one who listens to and learns from Jesus.

Now you may be a little confused, as I was, over the way Jesus refers to His followers here as "teachers of the law" or scribes. That's confusing because there was a class of religious lawyers who were experts in the Jewish Law and typically were opposed to Jesus. They were called the Scribes. But here Jesus uses that title "teacher of the law" to describe His followers who are students of the truth who will impart that truth to others. Most of Jesus' followers were uneducated, common people, but they were educated in the College of Christ ... the University of Jesus. They were instructed, trained by the best. And it wasn't just about learning; it was about living it out. Again...

## **INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO TRANSFORMATION**

Remember Jesus talked in the parable about the seed that fell into the fertile soil of a receptive heart and it produced all kinds of fruit. The first fruit that becomes evident when the Kingdom of God begins to operate in us is the fruit of Christ-like character.

**Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

These virtues are all evidence of the inward operation of the Kingdom. Can I just ask you today, “Is that fruit evident in your life?” Men what if I asked your wives? What if you asked my wife? Ladies, what if I asked your children? That’s the inward operation of the Kingdom of God. Then there’s...

## **2. THE OUTWARD OPERATION OF THE KINGDOM**

**Matthew 13:52 – “Every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”**

**ILLUSTRATION** – Now boys and girls are excited about this thing we call Trick-or-Treat. You get all dressed up in a costume and you go rap on somebody’s door. And the person who lives there opens the door and hopefully brings out a treasure from inside ... the really good stuff like some of those little Reese’s Cups candies or a miniature Almond Joy. I love those. Don’t be bringing out carrot sticks. We want the treasures. Amen?

Well here again Jesus throws a story alongside a powerful truth. Here’s someone who owns and manages a house, not just the building but everything and everyone in it. Inside his house is a storeroom, where his “treasures” are kept. But the treasures are not just there for safe keeping. Notice he “brings out” the treasures, meaning he throws or flings them out. Jesus is talking about truths that are learned, but are lived out. He’s talking about...

## **TRANSFORMATION THAT LEADS TO IMPACT**

When Jesus talks about someone bringing out treasures He’s talking about the outward extension of the Kingdom out into the world. We’ll talk in more detail

about this next week, but let me just say that the expansion and advancement of the Kingdom happens when followers of Jesus begin to live out the treasure of the Kingdom of God in their lives out in the world. When by our thoughts, words, deeds and decisions the values of the Kingdom of God are pressed into the world around us.

Jesus told another parable here in Matthew 13 about how the Kingdom expands.  
**Read Matthew 13:31-32.**

A mustard seed was the smallest seed in a typical Middle Eastern garden, but what starts small grows to the size of tree. It starts small and becomes something great. Just think about how that happened as Jesus' small band of disciples took the commands of Jesus seriously and became His witnesses in ever-expanding circles to where in 200 years it had gripped the whole Roman Empire. And it's still happening around the world. The Kingdom of God is expanding through our lives as Kingdom citizens. Don't underestimate the impact your little life can make. We're small seeds but we're part of something great that is getting even greater. But then Jesus throws another image alongside this truth:

**Matthew 13:33 - "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."**

In ancient times when a woman made bread she started with a lump of dough that had leaven (yeast) mixed in. Yeast is what causes the dough to rise and the bread to be light. Now before she baked the bread the woman would pinch off a little piece of the dough and set it aside. Why? The little piece of dough had yeast in it. And when she got ready to make another loaf of bread she would work that little pinch of dough from the last batch into the new loaf. And the little bit of yeast in that pinch of dough would quietly, invisibly work its way through the whole loaf, causing the whole loaf to rise.

And the Kingdom of God works that way. It's something almost imperceptible that becomes incredibly impactful. As children of the Kingdom we are placed in and "mixed in," to our culture and through us the yeast of the Kingdom of God permeates and penetrates and makes an impact wherever we are.

So as Kingdom citizens we are different and we make a difference. Jesus tells another parable here in Matthew 13 that revolves again around the image of a farmer planting seed. He sowed good seed, say, wheat, in his field. Then at night while he was sleeping an enemy came and sowed the seeds of weeds in the

farmer's field. Weeks later when the seeds began to sprout the farmer was shocked to discover that along with the wheat there were weeds growing in his field. And when Jesus explains this parable He says that He, the Son of Man sows the seed. And...

**Matthew 13:38 - The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,**

So in "the world" there are sons (children) of the Kingdom of God and there are also sons (children) of the evil one. We're supposed to be different in the way we live our lives out there in the world.

**PHOTO ILLUSTRATION** – Steph Curry plays for the NBA Golden State Warriors and he's a very out-spoken Christian. But in a game last week he got really angry at a ref for a call he made and Steph threw his mouthpiece at the ref. As it turns out it was a costly display of anger. He was kicked out of the game and fined \$50,000. But it was even more costly to him as a believer. It hurt his witness before others who know he's a believer. To Steph's credit he quickly realized his outburst had reflected poorly on Christ and he tweeted: "No excuse for that! Gotta remember who I'm playing for."

## **TRANSFORMATION THAT LEADS TO IMPACT**

We are not *of* the world, but we are *in* the world. And with my thoughts, words, deeds and decisions I'm either expanding the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of darkness. No one gets a pass on this. You can't hide in church. The King intends to mix you in to the world where you live out your life to make an impact. So again...

**Matthew 13:52b – "The kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."**

Christ-followers are people who have the treasure of the King and His Kingdom and wherever we are we bring it out. Some of the treasure is "old" and some of it is "new." It's "old" in that the Kingdom of God has been around from before time began. But it's also "new" in that it is still changing us today.

Those of us who know Christ have the treasure of King Jesus and the Kingdom. If the Kingdom is really in us, then it will explode out of us. The Kingdom is alive in us because the King is alive in us. The King who came to this earth 2000 years ago to inaugurate the Kingdom of God and who will come again at any time to

consummate the Kingdom is already living in us. He is our treasure. And we are to be like the owner of the house who brings out (flings out) the treasures. The Kingdom of God generates a lifestyle of generosity and service.

We have the treasure of the love and the life of the Kingdom in us. So when you go to work tomorrow around a bunch of people who could care less about spiritual things, just bring out the treasure. When you go to school tomorrow, don't think about how to blend in and be popular; just bring out the treasure. When you're in the waiting room of the doctor's office just bring out the treasure. When you run into a grumpy server at the restaurant, just bring out the treasure. When you run across a hurting friend, just bring out the treasure. When you see the emptiness in your friend's heart, just bring out the treasure.