

CONCORD
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LESSON 30

SUNDAY,
JULY 26, 2020



Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

31 He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; 32 it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

33 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; 46 on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

51 “Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” 52 And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Background

Matthew is often referred to as the “teaching gospel” for its emphasis on Jesus as teacher. As you read this passage, think about teachers you’ve had in your life. What makes a good teacher? This passage is full of small parables meant to bring the people’s focus to one objective-- What is the kingdom of God like?

Today’s lesson will focus on the unexpected consequences of doing the right thing.

Read the scripture out loud together.

Discuss with someone in your home. Have you ever been the recipient of unexpected generosity? What did that feel like?

What’s happening during this passage?

Jesus is teaching using many different images during this passage.

- He explains the kingdom of heaven as a “mustard seed” that while “smallest of all seeds,” it grows into “the greatest of shrubs” that can be a home for birds.
- He describes it as “yeast that a woman took” and mixed into flour until all of it was leavened.
- The Kingdom of heaven, according to Jesus, is like a “treasure” hidden in the field that someone found and hides. Then, this person goes to sell all that he has to buy that field.
- The kingdom of heaven is like “a merchant in search of fine pearls,” who, upon finding the perfect string, sells all he has to buy it.
- The Kingdom of heaven is like a “net thrown into the sea” that catches all kinds of fish. When the fishers came to shore, they sat down and separated the good fish from bad.

Jesus says that these are all parables to help understand the kingdom of heaven at the “end of the age,” one where angels will separate the evil from the righteous. He checks for understanding and says, “have you understood this?” To which the people say, “yes.” As a final image, he says, “every scribe trained for the

kingdom of heaven” is like the head of the household who can discern between the new and old.

Which of these images resonates for you the most? Why?

Why does Jesus use these images?

Matthew’s gospel is intentional to see Jesus as a teacher. Here, we have an example of Jesus the Teacher using multiple images to help the people understand what he was trying to say. He uses familiar images, of baking, of fishing, of field-work, of seeking valuable jewelry, all for the purpose of connecting with the people who hear him.

What is he trying to say here?

Jesus doesn’t quite say things explicitly. Most of the passage is Jesus speaking in riddles and metaphors. But eventually, he does say that “at the end of the age” the angels will separate “evil from righteous.” So what does that mean? We should look to Jesus’ other sermons/lessons to get more insight. Earlier in his ministry, Jesus tells the crowds that the kingdom of heaven belongs to “the poor”(Matthew 5:3), that the meek will inherit the earth (5:5), and that those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled”(5:6). In his later sermons, Jesus proclaims “woes” over hypocrites who focus on the wrong things (Matthew 23).

Why separate people at the end of the age?

Later in Matthew 25, Jesus says that when the “Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him,” he will “separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The rubric for the category one belongs to is “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?’ Those who care for the “least of these” will “go away into eternal punishment” and the “righteous into eternal life.”

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?

Connection to Today's World



In 1943, *Cabin in the Sky* was released. It was a historic film that made almost 2 million dollars at the box office, no easy feat for an all-Black cast. In this story, “backsliding” Little Joe makes a deal with Lucifer Jr. to get into heaven, if he can behave for six months.

Little Joe and his wife Petunia work through Little Joe’s gambling problem, his “wandering eye,” and even get him into the church. Of

course, both God’s army and Satan’s are fighting for Little Joe’s soul. Eventually, Little Joe and Petunia die in an unfortunate natural disaster. As they come to the pearly gates, the angel counts their deeds to determine where they should go. Petunia almost immediately is admitted to Heaven, but there’s debate about where Little Joe should go. Should someone who lived his life only thinking about himself first be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven?

Right when Little Joe is about to be separated from his wife forever, it turns out that his “little friend” Georgia Brown was so convicted by the disaster, that she donated all the money that Joe had spent upon her to the church. By the skin of his teeth, Little Joe gets to be with Petunia in heaven. The technicality was, if you could leave a mark on the world in a positive way, you’d be admitted to heaven. Little Joe’s small amount of faith left a mark on Georgia Brown, who surrendered her material wealth to support the works of the church.

Journal: What impact do you want to have on this world? How can you make small steps this week to meet that goal?

Closing: Sing/watch “Silver and Gold,” Kirk Franklin

For a video, click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqffPwV2TMU>

Silver and gold

Silver and gold

I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold

No fame or fortune

Nor riches untold

I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold

Prayer:

Dear God,

You are the God who knows exactly what we need, and what we want. You are the God who designed the world and called it good.

Today, God, we ask that you keep us focused on the right way to be in this world. Help us to make good choices, not because we're afraid of you, but because we Trust in you. Help us to spread the good news so the entire flour is leavened, help us move quickly and with intention like the mustard seed, help us to make wise choices like fishers who have to separate good fish from bad fish.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.