

Date: 01.07.2005

Passage: Matthew 13:31 – 34, 44 – 50

(Parables of the Mustard Seed, Yeast, Hidden Treasure, Pearl & Net)

Parables are insights to the workings (how) and content (what) of the kingdom of heaven. A kingdom consists not only the physical layout, but also the people in the kingdom, the unseen pieces such as the government and the law. Thus the kingdom of heaven not only refers to the spiritual sense of the kingdom, but also the people etc. Jesus uses the parables to show the different aspects of the kingdom of heaven.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

Characteristic of the mustard seed: smallest of the seeds, appears to have low expectations, yet it becomes the largest tree, something that the birds can count on

What is the significance of the parable?

In order for the mustard seed to grow, it has to die first (buried in the ground). Then being nurtured and nourished by the water and sunlight etc. it grows to become a tree that the birds can rest on. It shows that God nurtures us so that we can become something that God can use to support others – to be a Christian that can affect other people positively. It reminds us we should not underestimate what God can do with us even though we think we are small and weak.

Parable of the Yeast

Characteristic of the yeast: works silently, must be alive in order to work, transforms the structure/environment through its work.

What is the significance of the parable?

A little bit of something can make a lot of impact. God puts us on this earth to have an effect on others around us, e.g. the Great Commission to spread the gospel. In real life, yeast feeds of sugar and starch (food) to give off carbon dioxide and alcohol (the work). In order to be effective in God's kingdom, we need to read (eat) God's word (food), apply it (digest) and the results of the application will reveal God and His kingdom to others around us.

Contrast the mustard seed and yeast

Mustard Seed

◆ Must die to live and be effective

Jesus is the example when He died on the cross for our sins and became alive again when He resurrected on the third day. We have to be dead to ourselves, but be alive in God. We should be lively Christians in Him and to show the life to others.

Yeast

◆ Must be alive in order to be effective

Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Characteristics of the treasure: hidden from view, cost everything the man has

What is the significance of the parable?

Even though salvation is freely given, we should be willing to give up everything in order to gain the kingdom of heaven. Our gains from the kingdom of heaven are worth more than everything we gave up. It does not imply that we can purchase our way to heaven. Also note that salvation cannot be shared, nor inherited.

Parable of the Pearl

Characteristics of the pearl: precious, beautiful

What is the significance of the parable?

Similar to the parable of the hidden treasure, we should be willing to give up everything in order to gain the kingdom of heaven. The actions of the merchant represent people who are looking for the truth, thinking that there are many ways to it. However, there is only ONE way. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

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Parable of the Net

Characteristics of the fish: good ones (alive); bad ones (dead)

What is the significance of the parable?

The fish represents us, and the event represents the end of times when all the people will be gathered and judged. The good fish are the ones who are spiritually alive while the bad fish are the ones who are spiritually dead. This parable is similar to the one about the weeds at harvest time (Matthew 13: 30). Another application for this parable is to filter the things we let into our lives and our behavior (good behavior vs. bad behavior).

Other Notes:

Mustard seed and Yeast: show the workings of the kingdom of heaven

Hidden treasure and Pearl: show the blessings when we seek the kingdom of heaven