

Matthew 13:10-17 (Parable of the Sower – Part 1)

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[0 : 00] For the next two weeks, there's a two-week gap between us ending John's Gospel, just chapter 6, and Advent.

So get excited for that. But in these two weeks, this week and next week, we'll be doing a parables miniseries. So part one is me, that's this week, and next week is Alex Kohler doing part two. And if you look at Matthew chapter 13 with me, you see it's the parable of the sower. And so the parable of the sower, part one and part two. And Alex is going to actually take the first nine verses. And then he's going to take the parable of the sower explained, which is after our text this morning, from verses 18 to 23.

But, so it's going to be a sandwich, and you get the meat of the sandwich today. You'll get the bread next week. So our verses will be 10 through 17.

[1 : 10] But before we jump into this, I want you, let's trace some of the points in this text back through scripture. And so, as an intro, keep your finger here, but turn with me to Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 29. Do that for me. So here we're looking at Moses.

This is the law, the Torah. And in here, there's a very significant verse here for our text today. So if you're looking at Deuteronomy 29, verse 4, Moses writes to Israel, But to this day, the Lord has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.

This is somewhat of a curse to Israel here. And notice there's three organs. You have the heart. You have the eyes.

And then you have the ears. So just keep that in mind as we spend our time this morning in Matthew 13. Now, one more text, and then we'll jump into the Gospels.

[2 : 39] Isaiah 6. Turn with me there. Isaiah chapter 6. If you have heard a sermon on Isaiah 6, you probably have heard it from the first half of that chapter, because it is the great Isaiah's vision of the Lord.

Remember, there's seraphim. There's the angels flying around. There's the throne of God.

And there's the holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. That text. It's glorious. It preaches. But you probably have not heard a sermon on the last half of the chapter.

So from verse 8 on, it says, it's the call of Isaiah. And I heard the voice of the Lord. This is verse 8 of Isaiah 6.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us? Then I said, here am I. Send me. And he said, go and say to this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.

[3 : 50] Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy and blind eyes. Blind their eyes.

Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed. And he goes on. Now, what's significant about this?

Keep this in mind too. So you can flip back and you can stay. Don't worry. In Matthew chapter 13.

Notice the three organs show up again. And with the New Testament writers, this text of Isaiah, the second portion of Isaiah 6 is quoted three times in the New Testament.

So for the New Testament authors, it was a very important text. The call of Isaiah and what he is to, was Isaiah to say to Israel. And if you look in your cross references, there's no quoted text in the first half of chapter 6 of Isaiah.

The one that's most famous. But it is here in the parable of the sower explained. The purpose of the parables in chapter 13 of Matthew and at the very end of Acts. And throughout portions of that show up throughout the New Testament.

[5 : 10] So it's very important, this message. So we have seen Moses. We have seen Isaiah. And now we are to Jesus in what Jesus says.

So there's four parts to this message today. And I say four parts to this text. And one is a question. The disciples ask a question. And then Jesus answers it in three different parts.

So I'll read our text. Verse 10 of chapter 13 of Matthew. Then the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables?

And he answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. But to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given.

And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables.

[6 : 20] Because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear. Nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand.

And you will indeed see, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull. And with their eyes they can barely hear. And with their eyes they have closed.

Lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears. And understand with their heart. And turn, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see.

And your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it.

And to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Pray with me as we begin to dig into this text.

Father, thank you for giving us this text for us this morning.

[7 : 31] And I ask that you would help me to make the text clear. Make that meaning clear to all those who hear. And I ask that you would give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand your message.

Amen. Amen. So, why this text, I talked a little bit more about it, it's important to the New Testament. Hearts, eyes, ears.

You'll see even more. It's an important theme throughout Scripture. And it's pointing to faith, belief, wholehearted trust.

That's what this wholeheartedness, hearts, eyes, ears is pointing to. You see it from Moses, we've seen, to Isaiah and the prophets, to Jesus and the Gospels.

So, it's important for us to stop before we take a closer look at one of Jesus' most famous parables, the parable of the sower that you probably know, and pause and take a closer look at what he does in the middle of that parable.

[8 : 45] I think it's important for us to do. And we'll take a closer look at it with Alex next week. But, also, there's a connection here I don't want you to miss out on.

We had a, I don't know when it was, but we had a summer sermon series, wow, three S's, of the parable, of parables, and I chose the parable of the talents, which is the last parable in Matthew. And the parable of the talents, at the very end of that parable, if you flip there, if you read it this afternoon, I encourage you to do that after we take a closer look at this. He repeats, word by word, what he says in this section we're taking, we're taking a look at this morning.

So, the first parable, the parable of the sower, is connected to the last parable in Matthew. So, there's a connection there. And I always thought that was, why is that?

And we'll get into it. But what he repeats is verse 12. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.

[9 : 57] But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And that's in the last parable of Matthew. So, there's a connection there. That's on purpose.

So, let's dig in. And let's dig in in verse 10. So, the first part, there's a question. Then the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak to them in parables?

Genuine question from the disciples. If you look up in the beginning of chapter 13, he said, many parables. So, this is just the first one that Matthew records.

And then, after, there's a question that the disciples ask. Why do you speak to them in parables? Parables. So, parables is, parables, parable is a Greek word, and it's parables.

That's where we get the word parables in English. And it literally means comparison. And so, the meaning in the New Testament, how parables is worked, is a little elastic here.

[11:03] It could be proverbial, like a proverb, a symbol, symbolic, comparison. But in this text, in this context we're in, it's more of a story embodying some truth.

So, there's a story about the sower, and there's some truth in that. That's the context here. And so, they ask this question, why this type of way of answering, or speaking to these people?

He says, he uses parables on purpose. And the rest of the text is Jesus' answer to their question. So, second part here, verse 11.

And he answered them, and Jesus answered them, to you, it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. But to them, it has not been given.

I hope you see the contrast here. There's lots of contrasts in this text. It's you and them. To you, it has been given. But to them, it has not been given.

[12:14] So, what is it? Well, it's to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. You have a middle here. You have, on the one hand, to you, it has been given. But to them, it has not been given.

And in the middle, the content is what the content is. So, let's take that to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but let's work backwards. So, let's ask some questions about that line, but backwards.

So, first, kingdom of heaven. This kingdom of heaven, close Bible readers, I'm sure you know, this is unique to Matthew.

You don't really see it anywhere else. And kingdom of heaven, we kind of can just breeze through that quickly, but it's the heavenly kingdom. It is from heaven, it is also heavenly.

Meaning, there's a kingdom, and in a kingdom, someone reigns in every kingdom. But, heavenly kingdom, kingdom of heaven, who reigns?

[13:18] And that is God. God reigns in the heavenly kingdom. So, we could say, of the heavenly kingdom. So, working our way backwards here, secrets.

Secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Now, it's interesting, most translations have secrets, but it's the word where we get the word mysteries. So, you could easily say, mysteries.

So, this idea of mystery is here. So, you could say, the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. But, here's something you need to have in mind always.

Our modern notion of mystery is not what they intended. Not what Jesus intended here. They meant something different. So, in our modern context, just how it has happened, mystery has evolved into something completely unknown.

It's something that close to no one knows the content of. That's the modern use. So, we can't read that into when we see mystery in the New Testament, especially.

[14:27] But, the ancient way, the Greco-Roman context, it was more of, it was once concealed, but is now revealed.

That's, that's more of the, the mystery, when you see the word mystery, here in the Bible, think that. Think, once concealed, but now has been revealed.

Very important to understand that. So, I'm going to keep the word mysteries here, but have that in mind. So, last bit here is knowledge. It's to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

Knowledge of the mysteries of the king, of the heavenly kingdom, is what separates has been given and has not been given to you, talking to the disciples, and to them, others.

That's what differentiates those who have, have, and have not. The next verse makes clear. But let's dwell on the to know.

[15:35] Knowledge is also a tricky one that if you could just read through it to know, but let's, there, if you think about it, there are multiple ways of thinking about knowledge.

There, and here, I just want to highlight two I think is important to this text. It's, one, it's a cognitive knowledge, meaning you know of something, you know it exists.

Doesn't really have anything bearing on your life. But then, I want to highlight volitional knowledge here. And in the context, and especially if scripture generally and more specifically here, knowledge is just not a flat I know something, like, think cognitive.

But there's also volitional. And what I mean by that is that there is a desire there to know, to know something, to want to know someone.

one, it's not merely knowing of God, cognitive, but a desire to commit to God, volitional.

[16:47] And this, we have to be careful to think about every word of the text here. and I think there's a lot here when you think about just knowing about God, but personally knowing and desiring him.

This reminds me of a sermon I read in college by Jonathan Edwards. And he was not a Puritan, but he was influenced by Puritans.

So, naturally, this sermon that I read in college was called, True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils. We need more of those titles.

I don't have a title, I'm sorry. I should have thought about something like that. But his text, I remember where I was, what time of day it was, when I read this sermon.

It affected me so greatly. And it's on this idea of this knowledge. And his text was James chapter 2, verse 19. I'll read it to you real quick.

[17 : 54] His text was the text that says in James, you believe that God is one, you do well. Even the demons believe in Shudder.

So, Jonathan Edwards, he's living right before the revolution, think First Great Awakening in New England, and he asks his congregation a question.

what is the difference between man and demons? What is the difference between you and a demon? And I thought to myself, that's a good question.

Because if we're talking about one type of knowledge, they might know better than I. knowing about God. And he teases this out a little bit, and he finally gets to the end, and he says, what demons have is a knowledge of God that is cognitive.

cognitive. They know things about God. But, what demons do not have, he says, this is what he says, he says, they do not have a, when looking upon Christ, they do not have a sense of divine beauty when they look upon Christ.

[19 : 17] There is no, they do not see beauty when they look at Christ. they feel dread, guilt, hopeless fear.

It's a point, there are no atheistic demons. There's no agnostic. It is impossible because they know who God is. But the difference is, this volitional knowledge of God, this looking at Christ and seeing beauty, and knowing Christ and desiring to submit and to commit fully to him because we see him as good.

And he goes on, he says, this is, this sense of divine beauty is the first thing in the actual change made in the soul in true conversion and is the foundation of everything else belonging to that change.

He's saying, he's talking about what is true conversion? The foundation of this is this sense of divine beauty when looking to Christ. So, if we ask ourselves the same question, what do you see when looking at Christ?

do you have merely cognitive knowledge? Think cultural Christianity. That's what I'm really thinking about. That is not saving faith.

[20 : 54] That is something that the demons even have. But do you desire to see him? You desire, when you look at Christ, do you see divine beauty in the cross?

All good questions, I think, from this. And to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven is at the center of this, of those who have it and those who do not have that.

And what is it? It's knowledge of the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom. Remember, once concealed, now revealed in Christ.

Next verse. is verse 12. It goes further than this here, continues on in the same. So, verse 11 and 12 are connected.

And it says, for to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

[22 : 08] This is more of a proverbial, like saying here. And this is the one that's quoted in Matthew 25, 29, the parable of the talents. If you want to write that down and look at that later, Matthew 25, 29.

And I think he's using this the same way he's using it later. If you remember, the parable of the talents is all about the end times, eschatology.

It's an eschatological use of this saying in that context. And I think he's doing the same thing, actually. It's not anything different.

And notice there's a contrast here. The one who has and the one who has not. So, has or lacks what, we ask. What is it that some have or have not?

So, if we look above, we just, in verse 11, we saw that it was knowledge. Verse 13, it is understanding. But, not quite there yet.

[23 : 15] Let's take a look closer at this verse. For after, he says, for to the one who has, more will be given. And he says, even further than that, and he will have an abundance.

And then, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. You see, there's a parallel for the one who has, but from the one who has not.

And there's comments on both. So, we could summarize this by saying, knowledge will beget, or begotten, if we're going to use that word.

Knowledge will beget more knowledge, understanding, and end in blessing. And that's why he goes on. More will be given, and he will have an abundance.

Knowledge will beget more knowledge. Conversely, ignorance will beget more ignorance. Folly will beget more folly, and it will end in cursings.

[24 : 21] And we can see this looking back to Deuteronomy chapter 29. If you read that and you remember, at the end of the Torah, there's if you do this, this will happen.

If you don't do this, this will happen. And he predicts everything else. Moses writes at the very end of the Torah, and word for word, it is fulfilled through the coming of Christ.

So, the question we have to ask here, you're probably wondering if I'm going to tackle this. Why are there some who have and others that do not have?

Why is that the case? Why have and have not? It seems not fair. And here's a theological tension here, and let's call it divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. I think this text actually addresses that very tension, if we're going to use that word. So, if you look up verses 11 and 12, address divine sovereignty.

[25 : 38] Verses 13 and 14, notice that they are together, and notice that they are both acknowledged and affirmed.

They are both acknowledged and affirmed. And for Jesus, we can say this, for Jesus, it is without contradiction that divine sovereignty and human responsibility can coexist together in this, if we're going to say it, mysterious way.

And so, more on this below. So, verse 13 says, this is why, Jesus speaking here, as you remember, this is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Notice we have seen Deuteronomy, Isaiah, seeing, hearing, understanding. but this begins the section on human responsibility, as you remember, and it's on this little word, because.

This is why I speak to them in parables, because. This is a little word that we can just read and glance through, but let's camp out here. Let's think about this. The word because points to human responsibility.

[27 : 13] We've seen divine sovereignty now we see human responsibility. And it's because. But because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Think about what's not there. It isn't for, it's not since, it's not the word therefore, nor is it the word so that, but is specifically Matthew through the Holy Spirit specifically chose the word because.

And this word because places fault on man's response. Not on God, but on man's response. One commentator I found this week says, unbelief is rooted not in Jesus' words, but in hardened hearts. hearts. And here's a challenge that stuck with me when I read it. If few are chosen, it is not because many have not been called. And this points us to the missionary call that Jesus is pointing to.

So, verses 14 and 15, they read, indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, or we could say completely fulfilled, that says, and this is Isaiah 6, 9, and 10, it's word for word from the Greek translation, if you're wondering why there's differences, it says, you will indeed hear, but never understand, and you will indeed see, but never perceive.

[28 : 59] For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

Notice, this is, we could break this quote, this direct quote from Isaiah into three parts. There's a promise, there's the organs we've seen in Deuteronomy, and then there's another promise.

The last corresponds with the first. So, first, the promise. Notice, you will indeed hear, but never understand.

You will indeed see, but never perceive. This is a promise of curse, a promise of curse. He repeats it twice.

Here, you will, but never. You will, but never. Second part of this, three parts in this quote, the seeing, the hearing, the understanding, going back to Deuteronomy, what Moses says to Israel, ends with another promise, but a different promise, if you caught it.

[30 : 23] Turn, and I would heal them. this is a promise of hope, a promise of hope. I would heal them.

Turn, and I would heal them. The tense is future, and that points to a promise, and that points to hope. Let's land this plane.

last part, verses 16 and 17 here. Turn, after calling his heroes to turn, that he would heal them. Blessed, we could say happy, or flourishing even, going back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, or the Beatitudes, but blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Notice how hope-filled this is. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

[31 : 43] notice again, there is the seeing and there's the hearing. There's no heart, but it goes back and connects this to verse 9 of chapter 13.

He who has ears, let him hear. Going back, connecting that. So, if we're going to ask a question, what is it?

You did not, to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. What is the it? This is the answer that Jesus provides to his disciples about why parables.

They point, the parables point, to the eschatological revelation of God through Christ himself. Remember that word mystery or secret.

It was concealed. but has been now revealed. And I'm ripping off an Augustine quote that he said, the Old Testament was Christ concealed, the New Testament is Christ revealed.

[32 : 53] And that's what the focus here that Jesus is pointing to is God's gracious gift of this knowledge. It's not only a gift, but it is a call to action.

So, if we say, why secret? Why speak in parables? The mission of the disciples, those who have, and indeed, if you can say that you are in Christ, you are in this category, the mission of those who have is to share through proclamation.

We are to proclaim this knowledge, true knowledge, cognitive and volitional knowledge of Christ. and this is connected if we turn later in Matthew 17, verse 9, I'll read it to you.

This is, they're coming down from the mountain from the transfiguration. This is what Jesus said, and as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision of the transfiguration, revealing himself, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

Tell no one the negative. But, remember, how does Matthew end? before I read that, Jesus uses Isaiah's call to call the nations.

[34 : 30] Don't miss that. Jesus uses Isaiah's call to Israel to call the nations. Now, no longer only Israel, but now to the ends of the earth.

Think Acts chapter 1. And, thinking about tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead. Until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

I'll end how Matthew ends his gospel. The Great Commission. Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And, when they saw him, they worshipped him. But, some doubted. And, Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven, heavenly kingdom, and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

[35 : 43] and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. Let us go with joy and thankfulness and do likewise for the glory of God and for the glory of God alone.

Pray with me. as