Six Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven

The Weeds – the Mustard Seed – the Yeast – the Hidden Treasure – the Pearl – the Net
Matthew 13:24-52

We need to be saved from extra-Biblical standards of morality. There is a "dragnet" moving through our culture. Some of what it picks up is junk. Spirituality can very quickly become extra-Biblical and anti-Biblical. God's reconciling dragnet is moving through the oceans of our different cultures. It sometimes picks up dangerous things!

The focus of these parables is on doing God's will and then on the Day of Judgement when we are accountable to God we will be accepted into Paradise through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus our Saviour and our Master.

The Lord Jesus is a very encouraging teacher. He really has an eye for the main thing. He knows all the battles you and I suffer. He was part of a church of 3000 in Jerusalem just before He left the earth to return to His Father in heaven. After He left, churches began to multiply. The Lord Jesus so believed in the power of what God had done that He could physically leave and know that God was going to continue His work anyway through millions of believers down through the centuries.

Clearly the disciples were confused after the Resurrection but they were given a commission, ***"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of His Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age."*** (Mt. 28:19)

This is proof to us that we don't need Jesus' physical presence on the earth. God is working through His people by the power of the Holy Spirit. In spite of any opposition we might face, God's presence with us is secure. We might only see small evidences that God is at work but we know there will be a huge harvest, ***"Some out of every tribe and nation"***. (Rev. 5:9)

We must recover a deep appreciation of how much God loves the world. God isn't a detached spectator about what is going on in the world. God is involved in His Son the Lord Jesus. He has sent His Holy Spirit. This is a crucial perspective that we must always keep in mind. A harvest is coming! It won't be through our plans and strategies. It will be because God is who He is.

One of the parables the Lord Jesus taught His disciples is the Parable of the Weeds (Mt. 13: 24-30 and 36-43). He followed this with the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:31-32) and the Parable of the Yeast. (Mt. 13:33-35)

In the Parable of the Weeds Jesus said that the servants would ask the owner of the field if they should go and pull up the weeds. He said they shouldn't do so because they might pull up some of the wheat with them. He said both should grow together until harvest time and then the harvesters would be told to pull the weeds up first and tie them in bundles to be burned before gathering the wheat into the barn.

When Jesus had left the crowds and gone into the house with His disciples they asked him to explain the Parable of the Weeds. He told them that the one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed stands for the sons of the Kingdom and the weeds are the sons of the evil one. The enemy who sows among them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are the angels.

Jesus explained that the angels will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will be burned in the furnace and there will be great weeping. He ends by telling them, ***"Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear let him hear."*** (13:43)

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is very short – just two verses. Jesus says that the mustard seed is the smallest seed and yet when it grows it becomes the largest of all garden plants – a tree. Birds can perch in its branches.

In the next parable Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to yeast. A woman took the yeast and mixed it with a large amount of flour until it had worked its way through and transformed the dough.

In the fourth parable the Kingdom of God is compared to treasure in a field. A man found it and then he hid it again so no one else should find it. In his joy, he sold everything he had so he could buy the field and own the treasure.

Next Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value he went and sold everything he had so he could buy it.

The last of these parables is the Parable of the Net. Jesus describes a fisherman letting his net down into a lake and catching all kinds of fish. When the net was full he pulled it up on the shore and they sat and collected the good fish and threw away the bad. He tells His disciples that this is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous just as they did in the parable of the weeds.

Jesus asked His disciples, ***"Have you understood these things?"*** They said they had understood. There will always be a good number of things that we don't know and we don't understand. The Lord knows about this.

The point is that it is clear the Lord Jesus was not the Messiah that the Jewish people were hoping He was. The fact that He spoke in parables confused them and drove them away. They were expecting a great military general who would free them from the Romans and help them conquer all the surrounding nations.

The Lord Jesus deliberately used parables both to reveal Himself to those who were seeking Him and also to conceal Himself from those who just liked to get into theological debating games. We know that our commission is to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in this world. What should we focus on? Here are some of the things the Lord Jesus is saying in these Parables of the Kingdom.

- **The Parable of the Weeds**

This is a story of agricultural espionage. The story tells us that everyone was sleeping, but there was an enemy at work! There is no blame here but the parable raises one of the most fundamental questions that people ask – where did the weeds come from? In other words, 'Why is there so much evil?' The problem of evil is extremely troubling both to the non-Christian and to believers in the Lord Jesus. It is a really difficult problem! Where do weeds come from? What the servants want in this story is what most of us want – a major strong-armed intervention! We want some sort of machine to come along that will wipe all the weeds off the face of the earth forever.

The Lord Jesus doesn't give us an explanation of evil other than the explanation that the Bible consistently gives from beginning to end – an enemy (Satan) has done this. Jesus is more concerned how we act in the presence of evil than in giving us a theological explanation of evil. The question implied is, 'If an enemy has done this, whose side are you on? Whose methods are you going to adopt? Will you adopt the methods of the enemy or the methods of the farmer in this parable – the man who owns the field?' The manservants wanted to pull up the weeds to make a swift end of evil and have everything working according to God's plan.

In Jesus' explanation He clearly highlighted the fact that really this is not a parable about the weeds but rather about the wheat. The weeds will be ultimately destroyed but even while they are growing the wheat will grow strong and the wheat will be what is harvested at the end of the age. This doesn't mean that we should accept evil. We should always resist it. Evil has no origin of its own. It is like a parasite. Evil is there because of the existence of good. When we pray against evil we are praying because we know there is an Almighty Powerful God. There is goodness and there is salvation.

When we focus on the work of the enemy there are so many reasons and obstacles to convince us that we will never get anywhere, that people will never come to faith, that there will never be a harvest and that people will never abandon their own religion and become followers of the Lord Jesus etc.

The Lord Jesus is saying that there may be weeds, but they can never prevent the presence of the wheat. We should concentrate on the fact that there is wheat around and that is absolutely thrilling! We are not to focus on the weeds but on the wheat. As we do this it transforms our view of the church and of what God is doing all around the world. God is at work and there is nothing that Satan (the weeds) or anything/anybody else can do about it. This is very good news!

People criticised the preaching of the Lord Jesus. They didn't believe that what He said was true. They asked where The Kingdom of God was. Where was evidence of the power – military soldiers with weapons etc.?

- **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

This next story that Jesus told was about the tiny mustard seed – about 1 mm in diameter. You could hardly see it in your hand and you couldn't see it at all when it was buried in the ground. Jesus tells the story in a very relaxed style. The disciples are aware of evil. Jesus is being persecuted and now He says that The Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. It seems to be hidden and sometimes it feels as if it is totally absent. People can't see it. The disciples can't even see it.

Here Jesus is drawing attention to the insignificant beginnings of The Kingdom. We are tempted to think that big is always better, but no, The Kingdom is like a tiny little seed but look how it ends up. It becomes a huge tree and birds perch in its branches. When we are discouraged at the progress of the Gospel we need to focus on the dawn chorus of all those birds singing in unison in the branches of the tree. Our enemy often seeks to destroy us by getting our thoughts and our wills to focus on the wrong things. It doesn't mean that those things are not real. It is just that they are not the main focus. AW Tozer said, **"*We are called to an everlasting pre-occupation with God*"**.

These parables are about focus. Don't focus on the weeds but on the wheat.

- **The Parable of the Yeast**

Here we have a picture of a woman baking bread. She has a large mass of unmanageable dough. Is this a bit like the world we live in? If yeast is added to the dough it works away quietly. What can the woman do? Absolutely nothing! Once the yeast is mixed with the dough there is no way to remove it. God has planted His Kingdom and like the yeast it is fizzing all over the place and there is nothing the evil one can do about it though he constantly tries.

The Kingdom of God has arrived! If you believe this then it will change your entire perspective on the purposes of God. God is working His purposes out. The yeast is doing its work in this world.

- **The Parable of the Hidden Treasure**

Here we see that when you have found the treasure you can happily dispose of everything else. The treasure is in the field; you don't take it to the field. You are to find it. This means that if you want the treasure you must take the field. What could this mean? The treasure was in the field but it was hidden. It was there with all its power to bring joy and change and reconciliation even though it was unseen. The presence of the treasure is what makes the field valuable. The field was worthless to its owner until he found the treasure.

This is absolutely true of us! The world meant nothing to us until we found "the treasure". Then suddenly the world mattered to us. In fact everybody mattered. There is no distinction. Sometimes we treat evangelism in this world as if God won't find it possible to break through the problems, the barriers and the difficulties. But God has told us to do things. Little or nothing will happen until we move in obedience. Here the Lord Jesus is trying to tell us that God has done it! The surprising thing about the parable of the hidden treasure is that it appears that the man came across the treasure simply by luck.

- **The Parable of the Pearl**

This parable is similar to The Parable of the Treasure but here the merchant is deliberately looking for fine pearls. He is searching. He comes across his find by logic. It is a reasonable conclusion that

nearly every believer is shopping around – looking for something meaningful. There are great many shoppers in this world!

In the Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Parable of the Pearl we see that we must rediscover joy and constantly experience the undiluted joy of finding the treasure. The true mark of Biblical discipleship is joy.

- **The Parable of the Net**

This parable is similar to the parable of the weeds. It refers to the final judgement at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous. It is clear that only those who are 'righteous' can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. How to we become righteous? It is only through accepting the truth that Jesus died on the Cross to pay the price of our sins. It is only as we accept His sacrifice that God sees us as righteous and adopts us as His children in the Family of God.

We can see common themes in these stories:

- Something extremely precious and extremely exciting has been found.
- Everything else is disposable by comparison to what has been found.