

Matthew Ch13v1-23 - Kingdom Secret

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Date: 13 March 2022

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read God's Word. We're going to start in verse 1 and go all the way through to verse 23. If you need a Bible, there's one on the stand there. Please help yourself to them.

Matthew 13, verses 1 to 23. Let's hear God's Word to us today. That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.

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, saying, A farmer went out to sow his seed.

As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.

[1 : 12] Still other seeds fell on a good soil, where it produced a crop a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The disciples came to Jesus and asked, Why do you speak to the people in parables? Jesus replied, Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have, will be taken from them.

This is why I speak to them in parables. Though seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. You will be ever hearing, but never understanding. You will be ever seeing, but never perceiving.

[2 : 26] For this people's heart has become callous. They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.

But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For truly, I tell you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

Listen then to what the parable of the sower means. When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.

This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time.

When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word.

[3 : 44] But the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it.

This is the one who produces a crop yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Well, please keep your Bibles open, and let's pray.

Father, our prayer is simple. Open our ears that we would hear your truth.

Open our eyes that we might see you in your word. Open our hearts and give us understanding so that we might have life.

And that we might live in a way that brings a fruitful crop, an abundance, a hundred, sixty, or thirty times more than what was sown in our life.

[5 : 15] Be generous to us today. Hear us. Amen. Well, I have a puzzling question.

And I wonder if you can help. Matthew has been introducing us to the person of Jesus. Jesus, we've learnt, is God's chosen king with absolute power and supreme authority.

He's come to establish his eternal kingdom. A kingdom where the effects of sin, suffering, and Satan have been confronted and defeated.

And as people hear what Jesus says, and as they see what Jesus does, there are some people who get up and follow Jesus, while there are others who turn away from Jesus.

And the question is, why? Why is that? It's the same with this gathering here. Some of you will hear the message from the text, and your hearts are going to be absolutely captivated, not because the skills of the preacher are just brilliant, but simply because of what you hear.

[6 : 41] You're going to leave the building thinking about the word of God deeply. And as you reflect on it, you will see your life being changed.

Others, perhaps, will hear the same message, but will walk out that door without any impact whatsoever. Not because of the boring tones of the preacher, but because you simply cannot see. Your life will go on exactly the same way as before, as if you never heard anything different. Why is that?

Why is that? Well, I think Matthew chapter 13 gives us the answer. And more than that, it will show us why we follow, or why we don't.

So, three things that we're going to look at together. Here's the first one. A word to all. Look at verse 1.

[7 : 54] That same day, so Jesus had just been visiting his own family, he had been in their house. That same day, Jesus went out of the house, and he sat down by the lake.

Large crowds gathered round him, that he got into a boat, and sat on it, while all the people stood on the shore.

Then he told them many things. Now, picture the scene here. Crowds and crowds of people have come. That Jesus has to get into with a boat, push off a little bit offshore.

No discrimination. Everybody is welcomed. Nobody is excluded. All the crowd who are there, they can all now see Jesus out on the boat, and they can all hear what Jesus is teaching.

It's an audience of equals. No one has an advantage or a disadvantage. They're all seeing, and they're all hearing, the same things.

[9 : 01] But as our text made clear, as we read, people don't all hear and see in the same way. Look at verse 3.

Jesus told them many things in parables, saying, a farmer went out to sow his seed. And he tells this short little story about a farmer scattering his seed, and what happens to the seed.

It's straightforward enough. But what's not straightforward is what it means. What does this story mean? Look at verse 10.

The disciples came to him and asked, why do you speak to the people in parables? You see, the parable, or a parable, is a certain kind of teaching.

It's a practical story which highlights a spiritual reality. A practical story which highlights a spiritual reality.

[10 : 04] In other words, it's a story with a deeper meaning. And we know what that meaning is because, well, it's been revealed to us. It's been told to us as we read in verse 18 following.

But we need to place ourselves in the shoes of the disciples because they don't know what it means. So naturally, the disciples are a bit confused.

Jesus, why don't you just speak normally? Why don't you just say what you mean? Why not just get straight to the point and stop playing games with our heads?

Why are you teaching in parables? I mean, look at all the crowds that are here. All these people you have before you. And you're just confusing them with your stories.

Why are you making things difficult? Verse 11. Jesus replied, because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

[11 : 13] You see, in these stories, in these parables that I tell you, there's truth to be known. There is a message. But not everyone hears it or sees it.

Some will understand, but some won't understand. Verse 13. This is why I speak to them in parables.

Though seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand. Now, Jesus isn't a bad teacher.

It's not that Jesus is struggling with his communication. Jesus is deliberately and intentionally being secret in what he says.

Contrary to what we may think, the parables are not exposing a flaw in Jesus' teaching. The parables expose the reality of our hearts.

[12:12] are we those who desire to see and hear? Are we those who don't want to see and don't want to hear?

You see, as Jesus teaches, he's drawing out from the crowd those who will follow him and those who will ultimately ignore him.

So the question is, do I really want to see? Do I truly want to hear what Jesus is saying?

So, his word comes to all. But secondly, his word brings division.

Because as Jesus teaches, his words have a double impact. His word will either reveal the kingdom to you or his word will conceal the kingdom from you.

[13:16] First, revealing the kingdom of Jesus. Let's read verse 10. The disciples came to him. Why do you speak in parables?

Jesus replied, because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them. Now, when Jesus talks about the secrets of the kingdom, he's talking about something that's hidden but is revealed.

Something hidden but revealed. Look back with me just a page perhaps to chapter 11 and verse 25. Here Jesus has been talking about who he is and he's been demonstrating who he is by his miracles.

He's declaring that I'm God's promised king, the long-for Messiah. Let's pick it up in verse 25. At that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things, the things about Jesus and his kingdom, from the wise and the learned and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you are pleased to do. Jesus came proclaiming the good news and healing the sick. people could hear his words, see his miracles, but his kingdom remained hidden until it was revealed.

[14:49] That's why, back in chapter 13, verse 11, Jesus said, the secrets of the kingdom have been given to you. In other words, I have revealed the kingdom of heaven to you.

Your spiritual ears have been opened so that you can hear me. Your spiritual eyes have been opened so that you can see who I truly am. The disciples only understand who Jesus is and his kingdom because God has given them understanding.

Now, how does this understanding come? Well, it all comes by God's grace. Look closely at chapter 13, verse 11.

He says, it has been given to you. In other words, we can't make ourselves understand or believe. God must open up our spiritual eyes and ears if we are to know and to follow him.

That's why Jesus will say in verse 16, blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear. Let's think about this for ourselves.

[16:06] If you've heard the good news of the kingdom, if you are here today and you have repented and you can say, yes, I follow Jesus, the only reason why you do is because God has revealed it to you.

It's not because you were especially good and God thought, I really like them, I'm going to reveal the kingdom to them. It's not because you worked it out and you studied your Bible really well and it was just like, now I've got it.

Something from within that made you understand. And it's not because you woke up one morning and decided, you know what, I've decided to follow Jesus.

No, none of those things. You believe, you follow, because God revealed to you that Jesus is King, that you need to repent and you need to follow him.

In fact, if you have received God's grace in this way, even more is going to be given to you. Look at verse 12. Whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance.

[17:28] As you understand the kingdom, so you will be given greater understanding. It's a little bit like the dimmer switch that you might have in your house. the more you turn the switch, the more light you have.

And so as God gives your heart light, so the dimmer switch, so the trigger switch in our heart is turned up even more.

And more light is received. And we begin to see Jesus and his kingdom and our love for Jesus and his kingdom increases and grows. And your life as a Christian will blossom and develop and flourish in ways that you never thought possible.

All by God's grace. More will be given to you. So the word of Jesus reveals the kingdom of Jesus to you.

but there's also a second side to it, isn't there? Concealing Jesus and his kingdom.

[18 : 43] For some the word will lead to belief and for others as they hear the word it will lead to rejection. Again, look at verse 11. Jesus says, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them.

Not everyone will be given understanding. Verse 12. Look at the end of verse 12. Because whoever does not have even what they have will be taken from them.

It's like instead of the dimmer switch being turned up, it's being turned down. Instead of getting lighter and brighter, it slowly becomes darker so that you are no longer able to see anything.

Jesus and his kingdom become concealed to you. Now, I don't know about you but I read that and I was thinking about this.

I said, this is really unfair. For some it's been revealed but to others it's concealed.

[20 : 04] That's unfair. Why does God do that? Well, Jesus explains verse 13.

This is why I speak to them in parables. Those seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand. It's not that the crowds didn't have opportunity.

The crowds had seen Jesus' miracles, the healing of the sick, the casting out of demons, the raising of the dead. The crowds had heard Jesus' teaching, repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

They have seen, but they don't see. They've heard, but they don't hear. Or more accurately, they don't want to see and they don't want to hear.

Jesus gives an example for us, doesn't he, in verse 14 and 15. Verse 14, in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. Matthew quotes here, and this quote is from Isaiah chapter 6.

[21 : 18] And obviously before we get to chapter 6, there's five chapters. And you read through those five chapters and you will see how Israel persisted in their rebellion against God.

Warning after warning over hundreds of years and they refused to humble themselves and repent.

So God's judgment was going to fall and there would be a concealing, a hardening of their hearts.

And so we read verse 14, you will be ever hearing but never understanding. You will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused.

They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them.

You see God has been incredibly fair. Incredibly fair. God has been gracious towards Israel.

[22 : 32] He had rescued them from slavery. He had brought them into the promised land. He had provided them with judges and kings. He had spoken to them through the prophets. And God had sent him his ultimate prophet.

Look down at verse 17. For truly I tell you many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but didn't see it and to hear what you hear but didn't hear it.

They had been given every opportunity but they didn't believe. God had been gracious to the crowds.

God's king had been set before them in person. They had seen the miracles, heard the words,

given every opportunity but like Israel of old, verse 15, the people's hearts had become calloused.

They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes. hearts. You see as Jesus taught, he spoke in parables and the truth was concealed.

[23 : 49] The concealing was God's judgment. It was confirming their very own rejection. But it's not just Israel and it's not just the crowds.

You and I here are very privileged people. God has been gracious to us. Every week we hear about Jesus. But be warned.

Refusal to accept his word, refusal to learn from him and seek sight and hearing will lead to a concealing of Jesus.

It'll be like that dimmer switch. We won't even notice. But slowly over time the dimmer switch will go down and down and down. We won't even notice the darkness coming around us.

And it will become so dark we will not be able to see. Be warned. Be careful.

[24 : 56] Be careful. a word to all. A word that divides and a word for us.

You see the parable here actually exposes the reality of our own hearts this morning. And the question we need to deal with is this.

How am I responding to the word when I hear it? Every time I hear the word how do I respond to it?

How do I think about it? And to help us answer this question Jesus now explains the parable to us.

He reveals in words. Verse 18 Listen then to what the parable of the sower means. So the farmer who sows the seed is Jesus who sows his word.

And the different soils the hard path the rocky ground the thorns and thistles the good soil all reflect the condition of people's hearts.

[26 : 08] Now as we've read it you may think there are four responses but in fact there are actually only two. The first three all reflect those who have their ears and eyes closed.

it's only the final one that reflects the person who truly sees and hears and understands. So let's look at this parable and ask ourselves how do we hear God's word.

First the hard heart. Verse 19 when anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart.

Is that a picture of you? You hear like everybody else but it never actually travels to your heart.

as soon as the words are heard it's rejected it goes not for me I don't really like it. Just as the birds ate up the seed on the hard path so the devil comes and takes the word from your hard heart.

[27 : 35] If you do not want the word in your life if you do not desire the word God will let that word be taken from you.

A hard heart. Then there's a shallow heart. Verse 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.

And maybe that's the picture of your heart today. You think yes following Jesus is great. that's what I want to do. But verse 21 since they have no root they last only a short time when trouble or persecution comes because of the word they quickly fall away.

You see sooner or later we realise that you know following Jesus as king is hard. And as we follow him we realise that family and friends push against us and it's not easy and I'm not up for this and we fall away.

But why do they fall away? Verse 21 Because it did not take root in your heart. Rather than taking in the word you kept the word out of your life and you ignored it.

[29 : 11] You see if we don't continue to grow in the word if we don't nurture our hearts with the word if we don't water the seed with the word we'll fall away.

And then third there is the destructive heart. Verse 22 the seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word making it unfruitful.

Is that what describes your heart? You've made a good start in the Christian life you want to follow you hear it but then things begin to distract you.

You become anxious and worried about your future and health becomes more important and work becomes more important and in a desperate attempt to alleviate all your concerns you seek security in accumulating wealth.

As long as I have money, as long as I have job security everything is going to be alright. Instead of devotion to God and his word we get distracted and financial security slowly and subtly takes priority over the word.

[30 : 48] And instead of being fruitful we become unfruitful. Hard heart, shallow heart, distracted heart.

Do any of these resonate with you? all of them describe in one way or another the person who ultimately rejects God's word.

Their hearts have become calloused. They hardly hear. They've closed their eyes. But we have a humble heart.

verse 23 The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understand it.

It's a beautiful picture of what happens when we come humbly before God. We recognise that

without God's intervention we will never understand. Without his grace and a dependence on his

grace we'll never see, we'll never hear.

[32 : 01] But when we come in that humble dependence God softens our hard hearts. When we cry out to him and see our need he opens our closed ears and he opens our blind eyes.

And look what happens. Look at the end of verse 23. this is the one who produces a crop yielding a hundred sixty or thirty times what was sown.

The word that was sown expands and grows and you have a fruitful life. The word takes effect and we begin to seek the priorities of the kingdom.

we become consumed with proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. We become more beautiful people as we display the glory of the kingdom.

The message is crystal clear isn't it? As we hear the word we are either accepting it or rejecting it.

[33 : 12] The dimmer switch is either going up and it becomes brighter and more fruitful or the dimmer switch is turning down and it's getting darker and unfruitful.

How do you, how do I hear the word? It's a matter of life and death. Let me pray for us.

Lord, soften my calloused hard heart so that I might love your word and accept your word.

Open up my blocked ears that I might have understanding. Open my closed eyes so that I might see you as I ought.

Take my hard, shallow, distracted heart and give me a humble heart that I might live a fruitful life for your glory.

[34 : 36] Pour out your grace. Pour out your grace so that we might have all we need and more than we could ever imagine for we need it.

Thank you, Father, that you are generous and you are good. Amen. So we're going to sing and I hope this song can be sung in a way that show youvarii on the scale and sure.