

The Parable of the Dragnet

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[0 : 00] If you'd open up your Bibles to Matthew 13, children, you're dismissed to go learn about the building of a wall. And for the rest of us, would you open up your Bibles to Matthew 13?

We're going to be looking at one parable this morning. It's the parable of the net. Or the parable of the dragnet. And it's in verses 47-50.

I'm going to read that for us now. This is God's Word. This is our Lord Jesus speaking. Matthew 13, 47.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

Verse 49. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace.

[1 : 09] In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you hear this parable read, you know intuitively that judgment is in the air.

that there is a sorting going on in this parable that should make us all pause. On the day of final judgment, when each of us in this room and in this city and on this planet, when each of us stands before the risen Christ, He will judge us for everything that we have done.

Everything. Now here's what you're not going to care about in that moment. You're not going to care about having the latest iPhone.

When you're standing before the risen Christ, you're not going to care about how many promotions and accolades you got at work. When you're standing before the risen Jesus, it doesn't matter what house you lived in.

It doesn't matter what car you drove. It doesn't matter what kind of clothes you wore, the trips you took, the kind of sex you enjoyed or the sex you didn't get to enjoy. It's not going to matter on that day.

[2 : 30] It doesn't matter the number of followers you have on Twitter. It's not going to matter how many likes you got on Facebook on that day. It won't matter.

Here's what will matter. There was a former professional athlete turned missionary. His name is C.T. Studd. And he wrote a poem.

I've read it before. I'll just read you the first two stanzas. Two little lines I heard one day traveling along life's busy way, bringing conviction to my heart and from my mind would not depart.

Only one life which will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Only one life. Yes, only one. Soon will its fleeting hours be done.

Then in that day, my Lord to meet and stand before His judgment seat. Only one life which will soon be passed.

[3 : 33] Only what's done for Christ will last. This morning, as we get our minds around this parable of the dragnet, you will soon realize that Jesus is referring to that day.

The final day. The day of judgment. And this morning, I just want to ask you, are you aware of that day? Do you know it's coming?

Do you need to act in light of that day? Are you afraid of that day? Are you ashamed of that day?

The aim of this parable is to emphasize what's going to happen at the end of the age. Verse 49.

So it will be at the end of the age. It's a day in which all humankind is moving towards. The reality of that day should inject a sobriety into how we prioritize this day.

[4 : 44] We live this day in light of that day. And so, this morning, here's what I'd like to do. We're going to look at the parable detailed.

I'm just going to walk you through verses 47 and 48. And Jesus, as the classic teacher, incomparable, I'm just going to walk you through the parable. And then in 49 and 50, Jesus explains it.

He explains the parable for us. And so, we're going to walk through the parable explained. And in that section, I'm going to ask a series of questions about the final judgment. And then, we're going to wrap up by applying the parable.

So, parable detailed, parable explained, parable applied. This is a parable that is emphasizing what will happen at the end of the age. We live this day in light of that day.

So, would you look at verses 47 and 48? Let's look at this parable of the dragnet that came from the very lips of Jesus Himself. Now, I want to remind you that Matthew 13, 3-53, it's known as the parabolic discourse.

[5 : 55] It's one of five extended teachings by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. And they form the backbone of the Gospel itself. Well, in this discourse, there are eight parables.

The first four are spoken to crowds on a seashore. And the last four are spoken to Jesus' disciples in a house. The house that was on a waterfront that Jesus initially came out of in verse 1.

And so, the parable of the dragnet is the seventh of these eight parables. And He's speaking this parable to His disciples. Now, just a quick reminder of Jesus' use of the parables.

Two words, vertical blinds. Jesus would use parables like vertical blinds. And so, depending on someone's posture of heart towards Jesus would determine whether this parable would open up the truth of the kingdom or not.

And so, here's how it would work. So, Jesus would proclaim a parable and depending on those who received it, if that person's heart was tender and teachable towards Jesus, the parable would open up and the mystery of the kingdom of heaven would be revealed.

[7 : 10] It might take some more explaining, but it was revealed. Now, for those who had a hardened heart towards Jesus, those who were not willing to learn from the Savior, the parable actually concealed the mystery of the kingdom.

Their hearts were hard. They were unable to see. And so, a parable reveals the kingdom to those with a tender heart and it conceals the kingdom to those with a hardened heart.

And these parables in Matthew 13, they're all teaching about the kingdom of heaven. Every parable, the word kingdom shows up. Each one is about the kingdom of heaven.

And that's a big concept in our Bibles. It's also synonymous with the phrase kingdom of God. And so, what it refers to is the active saving reign of God to bring as many sinners under the reign of Jesus.

It's a reign of salvation. It's a reign of grace. On this Mother Day, I just want to remind you that when you were born, you were not born into the kingdom of heaven.

[8 : 26] You were born into the domain of darkness. You were living for your sin. You were following the prince of the power of the air. The Bible does not paint pretty pictures of human beings before they encounter Jesus.

But God, in His mercy and grace, He did something amazing. He sent Jesus, the Messiah King, and He inaugurated a whole new kingdom.

One that was a reign of grace. And so, what happens is when someone sees Jesus for who He is and they humble themselves, they are brought into the kingdom.

And so, what characterizes a citizen of the kingdom is a reverence for King Jesus and an obedience to do His will. That's what makes us distinguished from the rest of the world.

And so, all these parables are helping us see different aspects of this kingdom, of the saving reign of God on earth. a reign in which God delivers sinners from the domain of darkness into the gracious kingdom of Jesus.

[9 : 46] And so, the question that we need to be asking ourselves in light of verses 47-50 is, what is Jesus comparing the kingdom of heaven to in this parable? What is He emphasizing?

And what we see is that He's comparing it to catching fish in the first century. So now, let's look at the parable itself.

In verse 47, we see this. The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea. Now, what you've got to understand is there are two different kinds of fishing at the Sea of Galilee in the first century.

There was the casting of a net, and basically, that was around smaller net and around the circumference of the net were these little weights and it was a one-man operation and the guy would throw it out into the Sea of Galilee and it would sink down and he would pull on a rope and it would pull in some fish.

But that's not the kind of fishing Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about drag netting. And what drag netting was is, have you guys seen a tennis court? You know the tennis net?

[10:50] It's basically a drag net. And what would happen is they would take this net that looked like a big fence and it would be weighted on the bottom of the net.

and on top of the net would be extended ropes. And so what would happen is two boats would go out into the sea, they would throw this big net in, it would drop to the bottom, and the boats would take both ends of the rope and either circle a bunch of fish and kind of go around them and pull them up on the boat, or they would bring the ends of the ropes to shore and there would be men on the shore who would use the shoreline to pull up the net and pull up a catch.

That's what Jesus is talking about here. It was more of a commercial operation when it came to fishing on the Sea of Galilee. And so you can imagine it was a bigger catch in a drag net than in this casting net.

But it doesn't end with the casting of this net, this throwing out of this drag net. It was gathering fish of every kind.

Did you see that? Verse 47. Now, when you read that, and if you're kind of like me, you're always looking for a God's heart for the whole world. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

[12:13] And when you see this phrase fish of every kind, you can start thinking, well, he's talking about every person from the world. And in fact, there's 20 different kinds of fish swimming right now in the Sea of Galilee.

But that's not the point of what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is talking about basically two groups of fish.

The fish of every kind is pointing to the fact that this huge catch is going to need to be sorted. It's a mixed catch. That's the point.

Remember in the parable of the weeds and the wheat, that it was a mixed harvest? That among the wheat was planted weeds? That's what Jesus is getting at here.

Our time on earth, we live among a people some are following Jesus, others are not. Some are in the kingdom, some are not. And the point is that this huge catch of fish of every kind, it's going to need to be sorted.

[13:22] It's a mixed group. But notice that this parable doesn't end with just this kind of gathering of all these fish. Look at verse 48. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down.

It was drawn ashore when it was full. And there is a subtle nuance here. it's unseen.

It's at the bottom of the sea. They would feel the weight of the fish in it of course, but could they see it? It's not until this net was drawn ashore that you could see the catch.

There is a hiddenness theme all throughout the parables in Matthew 13. all the kingdom of heaven is hidden until it is finally realized on that day.

On that day, the kingdom of God will be fully seen for what it really is. But what I just want you to see there is there was a hiddenness to it.

[14:35] Well, it's brought up on shore in verse 48, and these men sit down, which must have been the common way of sorting fish that day, and they sorted the fish.

Now, if you fish, you abide by the Wisconsin DNR regulations of fishing. I don't fish. I don't like fish looking at me in the face wanting to kiss me.

That's not my deal. I'm not interested in that. But I do get the guidelines that there is a time and a place to fish for certain fish. There's a season.

There's a size. And there's even an amount. There's regulations. And so, when you go fishing, you've got to sort accordingly. Remember that Jesus is speaking not to Wisconsinites living in the 21st century.

He's speaking to Jewish fishermen. He's making an appeal to Jews at the time. And what you need to know is that Jews would have sorted this catch of fish according to a certain verse in your Bible.

[15:39] people. It's in Leviticus chapter 11 verses 9 through 12. It's a section that talks about clean and unclean animals. Animals that Jews could eat and could not eat.

And it was applied to fishing. And so, if they went fishing, they would have to sort the catch based on the requirements of Leviticus 11. And this is what it was.

If a fish had fins and scales, you could keep it. But if the fish did not have fins or scales, you had to discard it. One was clean, one was unclean.

The standard was given. The judgment was made. It was clear. And what all this means is that eels and catfish were to be thrown away because they didn't have fins or didn't have fins and scales.

They were too snake-like. But this parable doesn't end with a sorting. Look at the rest of verse 48.

[16:48] The good into containers but threw away the bad. The sorting goes beyond just a sort.

there are two destinations. The good fish are kept in good containers but the bad fish are thrown away. They're discarded. So this parable ends with the big catch of fish either in a good container or thrown away and we're left asking a question.

You should be asking the question which fish am I? But we're also asking the question Jesus what are you getting at? What's the point of the parable? What do you want us to know about the kingdom of heaven or the saving reign of God?

And for that answer we now look at verses 49 and 50 because Jesus himself explains the parable.

So let's look at verses 49 and 50.

What you need to see first is in verse 49 you have that first sentence is an interpretive key that unlocks the parable and opens it to us.

[18:02] And so what Jesus says in verse 49 that first sentence is this. So it will be at the end of the age. All of a sudden we're no longer on the seashore of the Sea of Galilee.

All of a sudden Jesus is talking about this big picture time when all things are coming to ahead.

Jesus is interpreting the parable for us.

And what he is saying is that this parable points to the end of time. Now when you hear that word end of time be thinking culmination.

The coming together of something big. God's plan of salvation being manifest. Being brought into sight.

What Jesus is comparing this dragnet to. The saving reign of God is not just a dragnet. What Jesus is saying is that this parable is comparing the saving reign of God with the whole process from throwing the dragnet in to pulling it up on shore to sorting it out and to placing some fish here and some fish there.

[19:31] It is an overview of salvation history. In verse 39 Jesus already talked about the end of the age and his explanation of the wheat and the tares.

The harvest is the end of the age he says. In other words in that parable he's comparing God's work of salvation to a process climaxing and sowing growing and reaping.

The mustard seed starts small and hidden and then culminates into fruition into a large and highly visible tree in verses 31 and 32. In verse 33 the leaven starts small it's concentrated it's hidden and then it culminates in being spread through a large quantity of flour that is seen because it gives rise to the whole thing.

So what Jesus is helping us see is this the kingdom of heaven is on the move but it's not this kind of narrow line that ends in a period. The kingdom of heaven is expanding fullness moving towards an end point that's an exclamation point.

The saving reign of God is God's active progressive work of salvation that's moving through time towards a very public culmination.

[21:03] A final judgment in which all will be seen. one implication is this despite what you may feel sometimes despite what you hear on the news despite what you read in the papers God is at work.

He is sovereignly orchestrating all things towards one great day. Furthermore the emphasis of this parable is not so much of what happens in the water but what happens on the shore what is seen.

It's the culmination the end of the age that sorting that separating out that judgment.

What Jesus does here is in verses 49 and 50 he emphasizes two end time realities. In verse 49 he emphasizes the judgment final judgment and in verse 50 he emphasizes hell.

Now what I'd like to do now is ask a series of questions of what we see in verses 49 and 50 and then look to the rest of the scriptures to help us understand what God means by final judgment and what about hell.

[22 : 37] Is hell harsh? Oh yeah it is. The question I want to ask this morning is is hell just? So this parable is about the end of the age.

It's about final judgment. So let's ask this. Basic question number one. Will there be a final judgment?

Well according to this verse this parable the answer is yes there will be a final judgment. Jesus believed that time is moving to a point in which all people will be gathered before the judge and all will be judged.

And that judgment will be a judgment of perfect justice. Complete justice. Will there be a final judgment?

Well Jesus is saying well yeah. He's talking about it as a final sort a final separating of fish. The next question I want to ask is who will be judged on that day who will be judged?

[23 : 55] All people who have ever lived on the face of this planet since Adam and Eve will be judged.

Everyone. That includes me. That includes you. That includes everyone in this room. That includes everyone in our city. That includes everyone in your family.

Everyone will be judged. Now I want you to flip back to Matthew chapter 25 in your Bible. This is the last discourse that Jesus is speaking.

And in verse 31 and 32 I want you to hear what Jesus has to say. Again he's speaking about the end times.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory. This is verse 31 of chapter 25. When the Son of Man comes in his glory. Now that should ring a bell. The Son of Man is Jesus' choice designation of himself.

[25 : 02] He's pulling back to Daniel chapter 7 and it's fulfillment. God has given him a kingdom. An everlasting one. And he says when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered do you see it in your Bible? Before him will be gathered all the nations all people from all time.

Look at Acts chapter 17. Flip to your right. Keep on going. You'll pass John. You'll run into the book of Acts and go to Acts 17.

Paul is in Athens and Paul is preaching at the Areopagus and he's preaching to some well educated people and he says this verses 30 through 32 the times of ignorance God overlooked but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he's fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness Revelation chapter 20 11 through 12 there's this great resurrection from the dead of all people who will stand before the throne and they will be judged every one of them Romans chapter 14 10 through 12 why do you pass judgment on your brother he's speaking to Christians or you why do you despise your brother for we will all stand before the judgment seat of God for it is risen as I live says the Lord every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to

God verse 12 so then each of us will give an account of himself to God it's not just everybody who's going to be standing before the throne on that day you will stand before the throne on that day 2nd Corinthians 5 10 we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ who will be judged on that day everyone all of us everyone whether you revere King Jesus and obey him or you reject King Jesus and don't give a rip of what he has to say all will be judged let's ask another question on that day of judgment what will we be judged for what standard what standard will this judgment be made I mean the fish on the shore in the parable they were judged according to

[27 : 48] Leviticus 11 when you go fishing in Wisconsin you kind of working with Wisconsin D&R; guidelines will the judge at the final judgment determine his judgments on you and on me based upon the morality of our culture no will he base his judgments on us and the law of the land no on what grounds will God judge you and me and the rest of mankind well he says in act 17 he will judge the world in righteousness you remember the psalm I opened up the service with it's psalm 96 let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice let the sea roar and all that fills it let the field exult and everything in it then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the

Lord for he comes for he comes to judge the earth he will judge the world in righteousness this righteousness is not some arbitrary righteousness this is what I feel like today but it's a righteousness that is established on the very unchanging character of God himself it's a right way of

loving it's a right way of thinking it's a right way of feeling it's a right way of speaking it's a right way of neighboring on that day we're going to be held accountable for the way that we interact with others around us do you want to know what God requires of you do you remember Matthew chapter 5 verse 48 Jesus says be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect that should ring of the rhythm of 1st Peter 1 16 be holy for I am holy

God has revealed his righteous standard not only in his own character but in the rules and guidelines laid out in the Bible God's word sets forth a perfect standard of righteousness and in so doing it exposes the deep seated sin in idolatry in all of us now you may be sitting there saying well what if people don't have God's word are they still accountable Romans 1 says absolutely God has revealed his invisible attributes to all they are all without excuse what condemns people to hell is not a rejection of Jesus it's a disobedience to doing the law of God now if you read Matthew chapter 5 verse 21 forward and you read it asking yourself do I measure up to Jesus what Jesus is calling me to you would quickly realize that you fall way short that you seek to kill people in your heart when you're angry with them that you commit adultery in your heart more than you care to admit that you would rather retaliate an eye for an eye than turn your cheek that you would rather hate your enemies than love your enemies what it shuts us up under is that we're all sinners we're all in a place we're all condemned we all fall short we fall short of the glory of God all of us not one of us is able to stand in the judgment not one of us what does

God require what does he base his judgments on he bases it on his righteousness he doesn't lower the standard he is the standard and we fall short but he's done something about it who are the evil and the righteous in verse 49 we read this so we'll be at the end of the age the angels will come and separate the evil from the righteous who are the evil and the righteous well in the parable the fishermen separate the bad fish from the good fish and what Jesus is saying there is that the fish represent people the angels will separate the evil people from the righteous people on that day all of humanity falls into two groups of people on that day on that day you'll either fall into the evil group or the righteous group it's the same group of people that Jesus talks about in the weeds and the tares the sons of the evil one and the sons of the kingdom the weeds and the wheat the bad fish and the good fish the righteous the evil and the righteous we got to ask the question what's the difference between the two because whatever the difference between the two is is what we need to pay attention to and the difference between the two is

Jesus more specifically the difference between the two is one's posture of heart towards Jesus your willingness to come under his gracious reign what you believe about Jesus will inevitably show up in the way that you live your life and so when we read about these judgments to come and their judgments of works what their judgments of are determining who rules your heart who are you living for what the Bible calls good works or deeds in keeping with repentance also the fruit of the spirit what they are are works that evidence a change of heart towards God so the good works verify what God in his grace has done in your life we're not saved by good works we're saved for good works and so if you think about your citizenship of heaven if you think of kind of like kingdom credentials your good works after you were converted from sin converted to

[34 : 45] Christ your good works give God something to point at and say yes he is converted yes he has been saved and so if we encounter someone who professes to be a follower of Jesus but they're living like a little devil their life doesn't match up their profession we can see that and God can see that too who are the evil and who are the righteous the righteous are those who've been saved by God's grace they've been radically changed from the inside they've been given new hearts to worship the one true God and it shows up in a changed life that's who the righteous are but the evil are those who persist in their sin they are living for things that are not God and when they're not living for

God they're living for something in God's place which of course is idolatry who are the evil and who are the righteous the righteous are those who belong to Jesus the evil are not another question did you notice how public the final judgment is that on that day all the nations will be gathered around the throne and every person will be held to account for all of their works it's very public do you know why it is God's ultimate vindication it's his ultimate step of saying I've been reigning all along my justice is now full and complete all can see now that no one no one can raise a voice against me on that day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord let me close with this who will judge on that day who sits on the throne on that day who will you stand before on that day what the scriptures teach is that Jesus is the judge in

Matthew chapter 5 verse 32 Jesus is talking about himself and he says when the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he will sit on his glorious throne before him will be gathered all the nations and he the son of man will separate people one from another as shepherds separate the sheep from the goats and he will place the sheep on his right but the goats on his left then the king will say to those on his right come you are blessed by my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world let your eyes gaze down to 41 then he will say to those on his left depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels

Jesus is the judge Jesus is the king in Acts 17 Jesus is the man that God appointed to judge the world in righteousness assuring all by raising him from the dead 2nd Corinthians 5 10 we all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ Jesus is uniquely qualified to be the judge he is a sinless man he is the only one who walked on this planet without sinning once though he was tempted in every way that makes him sympathetic on his judgment seat but it also makes him full of integrity when he passes his judgments Jesus is also uniquely qualified to be the judge because he is fully God not only was he a sinless man but he's fully God his judgment is inscrutable it's accurate it is true it's full of justice he will miss nothing on the day of judgment

Matthew 12 36 says that every careless word that comes out of your mouth will be held to account he's missing nothing and there's no spin none perfectly true everything about everyone will be exposed as J.I.

[39 : 42] Packer says uniquely qualified he's a sinless man he's fully God and he's uniquely qualified to be the judge because he's the only savior he knows those whom have cried out to him and have bowed their knee and with whom he has shed his blood he knows his own it's not mysterious to him now check this out if Jesus is your savior if you bowed your knee to him if you revere him as your king you're looking to obey him in all the ways when you step in front of his judgment seat you're going to be looking at the one who died for you you're going to be looking at the one who hung on a cross for you you're going to be looking at the one who this judge who gave himself for you already do you know the effect that is it casts out all fear there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in

Christ Jesus brothers and sisters on that will you be held to account yes you will but you need not fear condemnation because your king who is your judge is also your savior on judgment day there will be a calling to account to believers but it will be a day of mercy and grace that verse there is therefore now no condemnation that's Romans 8 1 Romans 14 12 says but we will all give an account before him both are true imagine with me on that great day you have been gathered with all the billions of people that have walked the face of the earth and there is a separation taking place by the angels what will be going on in your heart in that moment what will you be thinking and then there is this line that forms

I don't know if this is the way it's going to happen but you will know that the throne lies before you and you know that everyone before you is giving an account and everyone behind you is giving an account what's happening in your heart as you move one step closer what's going on are you afraid or are you anticipating are you looking forward to locking eyes with your king and saying something to the extent of I'm a mixed bag and you know it but you also know that I belong to you because you shed your blood to me that's all I got to say that's all I can say for some the judgment day will be horrific for others judgment day will be a day of rejoicing for you will see your savior face to face this morning

I don't have time to answer the question is hell just but if you want to come up afterwards I would be glad to talk to you about it then I want to part with just a couple questions this morning you came in were you aware of a final judgment were you aware of what Jesus taught and do you agree with it is it true is there really a point in time in which God is drawing us all to do you need to act if you are not a Christian you have been warned and today is a day in which you can cry out to Jesus now and you can say save me and he will save you if that's where you are at please come on down I would love to talk to you other people be down here love to talk to you there's a group of people in here that

I am particularly concerned about you're a professing Christian and presently you're actively engaging in unrepentant sin let this promised reality of final judgment warn you call you to repentance turn from your sin turn to your Savior confess to him that what you're doing is wrong don't ignore this do you need to act are you afraid remember your judge is also your Savior and so

if you're a follower of Jesus and you know you belong to him you can be assured that on that day you have nothing to fear the last is are you ashamed does this doctrine of the final judgment does that make you ashamed is that something you don't talk about and are afraid to talk about you're ashamed to talk about

[45 : 23] Jesus is not ashamed this is something that we should not be ashamed of rather because if it's true we should be persuading others in the words of Paul we should be helping them consider is this true and if it is you need to take to heart what God offers you in Jesus today only one life yes only one soon will its fleeting hours be done then in that day my Lord to meet and stand before his judgment seat only one life which will soon be passed only what's done for Christ will last let's pray Lord

Jesus we do thank you that not only you have died for us and not only were you raised from the dead not only are you reigning now and that you are advancing your kingdom even as these words fall on our dear friend's ears but Lord Jesus there's coming a day when you return and you will take your rightful place on the throne and that all will be gathered before you and you will judge all with equity and righteousness and justice will prevail and you will be glorified God I pray that you would make us a people who live this day in light of that day God may we be a people who take care to know that there is a final day it's your name Jesus we pray amen