

Fulfillment: Responding to Jesus

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 13, we're going to look at a few verses out of that as we come down to the end here. But I was just, it's been a while since I've sang these particular hymns, and I thought this was really interesting, so I just have to read this, right?

So the third verse of Send the Light. Let us pray that grace may everywhere abound. Of course, I couldn't sing the rhythm of that. I don't know what happened to me. Send the light, send the light, and a Christ-like spirit everywhere be found.

A Christ-like spirit everywhere be found. You know why that's so important? Because we, as God's church, not just First Baptist, but all the churches in America, have bought into a defeatist mindset that says, well, we'll share the gospel, maybe a few will get saved, but it's going to get so bad that, you know, hopefully we get raptured out of here.

And the problem with that is that the gospel is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died and who rose and who rules today. And so if he saves a person, that person is radically saved.

And that should then change the culture around them. And so as we look into our passage today and we talk about this very thing, my prayer is that we will have a mindset of victory over these things and not defeat.

[1 : 26] Not defeat. I'm going to read just the first three verses of Matthew 13. We're going to read through the rest of it as we go, putting it together in a way that I think will help us grasp what's going on.

So let me read the first three verses and then I'll pray. That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea and a large crowds gathered to him so that he got into a boat and sat down.

And the whole crowd was standing on the beach and he spoke many things to them in parables saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow. Father, I thank you for your word.

And I thank you that you've given to us such a beautiful deposit of truth. A truth that is sharper than any two-edged sword.

That every word in this scripture is breathed out by you. That you used your Holy Spirit to move men to write.

[2 : 25] And that this sharp two-edged sword is able to divide asunder the soul and spirit, the joint and marrow. And show us our motivations.

And show us our intentions. And it equips us so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped lacking nothing. So that we can do every good work you've called us to do.

And I pray, Lord, that you would help us to love your word. And to be taught by it today. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. So we've been talking about the story of the Bible from creation to the cross.

And last week as we looked at the empty tomb, one of the things that I was trying to do in painting the picture was for us to remember just how horrible it can be out in the world around us.

And the things that are going on. And the sin that is there. And the rampant sin that is there. And that part of the hope we have as Christians in the midst of a culture like that is the resurrection.

[3 : 33] We can live with hope because of what Christ has done. And as we finish this entire series today, I want to ask the question, well, what can we do about it?

What do we need to do about it? In the darkest of times, when sickness ravages the bodies of our loved ones, when there's rampant sexual sin ruining every part of our culture, when there are fewer and fewer marriages happening because no one sees the point of it, when corporate greed casts a shadow over everyone who holds to biblical principles, the question is, has the mission changed?

No. The mission is unchanged. We're still supposed to do today what the disciples did back then. We have one mission and one mission only, and that is to build the kingdom of God through the preaching of the word.

And I want us to understand this mission. I want us to grasp what all of this means by asking two questions based upon Matthew chapter 13. And the first question is, why did Jesus speak to the disciples, to all the people in parables?

Why did he speak in parables? Now, there's actually three or four reasons in the text, and I'm only going to pull out two because I think these are the two that are the most important to us today.

[5 : 01] So why did Jesus speak in parables? The first reason was to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom to his disciples. He spoke in parables to reveal the mysteries of the kingdom to his disciples.

Look at Matthew chapter 13, verse 10 and 11. He had spoken the parable of the sower, which we're going to get back to in just a second. And the disciples came to him and said, why do you speak to them in parables?

And he answered them, to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them it has not been granted. So he's spoken this parable of the sower, verses 1 through 9.

They're asking, why are you doing this? And his answer is, to you it's been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has things about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, things that the disciples need to know, things that they need to understand, and he wants to make sure they get it, so he is speaking in parables to everyone.

And he even goes so far as to say this, it has been given, it has been granted to you. In other words, as he speaks this parable, the disciples are in the same sort of boat as everyone else.

[6 : 17] They don't understand it. They don't get it, except that he grants to them to get it. He opens their minds, he opens their hearts, so that they can understand what these parables mean about the kingdom of God.

Okay, that's great. If he's just going to tell them the secrets, why in the world does he have to do it in parables? Why is that happening that way?

Well, I think it's happening this way because this is how he's equipping them to spread the message of the kingdom themselves. This is how he's training them, equipping them, to be able to spread the message themselves.

Look at Matthew chapter 13, verse 51 and 52. After he's done all of these parables, he comes down to the end, he says, have you understood all these things? So he's spoken these parables to the crowds, to his disciples, and he's expecting they understand, because he's also gone through and explained the parables to his disciples.

So they get the teaching, they get the understanding of it, and he's saying, do you get it? And they say, yes. And he said to them, therefore, every scribe who's become a disciple of the kingdom, of the kingdom of heaven, is like a head of household who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

[7 : 42] Jesus, you could have been just a little bit more obscure. What are you talking about? Jesus, he's using the idea of a scribe, and they would know exactly what a scribe is.

A scribe is somebody who's an expert in the law. And he's saying, okay, even an expert in the law who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of God. In other words, they're leaving what the religious thing is going on here in this culture, and now they're coming to follow me.

He's looking at his disciples, and he's saying, that's you. You've left all to come follow me. You're a disciple of the kingdom. And as a disciple of the kingdom, they become the head of a household.

It's a very technical term. That means he's the master of the house. As master of the house, it's his responsibility to care for the master's house, to care for the master's family, and to care for the master's servants.

And as head of the house, he brings out from the treasures, from the storehouses, things new and old, in order to provide for the family, to provide for the house, to provide for the servants.

[8 : 47] It's the master of the household, who has the responsibility to be sure, that further servants down the line, are thoroughly equipped, and thoroughly furnished, to have all that they need, to be able to do their charge, under the master.

Now hopefully you can begin to see, how this is being transferred, into the kingdom of God. What he's saying is that the disciples, have a responsibility for the church.

These 11 disciples, because we're excluding Judas at this point, right? Everybody's with me? Okay, great. If not, just ask me later. These 12 disciples, have a responsibility for the church of God.

They have a responsibility, for the people of God, to oversee them, to put them to work, to help them have all that they need, to bring forth from the stores, things old and new, so that they might do the things, that they are called to do.

It is a statement, concerning the responsibility, that the disciples have, as the foundation of the church. And this is important, because this helps us understand, what a church is.

[9 : 58] It helps us understand, what a church is. The church of Jesus Christ, are saints, who are servants, in his household.

The church, are saints, who are servants, in his household, who are overseen, and trained, by these special disciples, chosen by Christ, while he was here upon earth.

We are dependent upon, these spirit inspired men, who were moved by the Holy Spirit, to write the scriptures down for us.

We are absolutely, entirely dependent, upon the head, of the household, the head servants, of the household, the disciples. Everything that they wrote, is God breathed, vital, important, and the word of God.

So we are dependent, upon the ministry, of the apostles, today. We need, the ministry, of the apostles, today, in the word, that they wrote, in order for us, to even know God.

[11 : 10] For us to, walk, with God. For us to be, equipped, for every good work. For us to be, trained, in righteousness.

Without the, Holy Spirit, using these men, we would not, even know, who Jesus, was. Let that, let that sink in, for just a second.

What I'm saying, is that the church, is built, by the scriptures. The church, doesn't build, the scriptures.

Let me say that, another way. The scriptures, are the source, of the, building, of the church.

The church, is not the source, of the establishment, of scripture. You watch, the discovery channel, you listen to, other denominations, and you're going to, get the idea, that the church, is in charge, of putting forth, what scripture is.

[12 : 20] No, no, no, no, backwards, wrong. God's word, establishes, the church. It makes us, who we are.

And that's partly, why Jesus spoke, in parables, so that the disciples, would be able, to train, the next generation. This also helps us, grasp, what we ought, to be doing. Helps us to grasp, what we ought, to be doing.

If Jesus, gave this ministry, to the apostles, apostles, we, because we have, that ministry, of the apostles, are charged, by their ministry, to complete, the task, that they started.

Listen, let me say it this way, they built the foundation, and framing, and we're all, the drywallers, and the electricians, and the plumbers. They are the, foundation crew, they're the framers, we're the trim carpenters, we're here, to finish, what they started.

Let me say it another way, how many of you know these names? Let's see if you know these names. Raise your hand, if you know these names, okay? Josiah Bartlett. No, okay.

[13 : 30] Carter Braxton. Abraham Clark. Do you know? You do. Oh, look at you.

William Floyd. Anybody know them? David says he knows them. Anybody else? Okay. Lyman Hall.

Made name, Hall. There you go. Okay, last one, you'll all get it. John Hancock. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Who are they? Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

That's right. They laid the foundation, upon which we build. We are not required in every generation to sign a new declaration.

It's done. It's in the past, but we live based upon the reality of that. the apostles had a ministry to do.

[14 : 31] They did their ministry, and now we live on their ministry. They had mysteries revealed to them, and we have mysteries that we receive from them.

We are not apostles, but the church is built upon the apostles and the prophets. All of this can be summarized with one word, that if we are finishing their task, it is called missions.

It's called missions. It's taking the truths of the kingdom into the rest of the world.

So that's the first question. Why does Jesus speak in parables? The second question is then what does the sower parable mean? Because if we're going to be taking the gospel of the kingdom to the ends of the earth, we need to understand three things out of this parable.

Now, I'm not going to get all detailed about the different soils. That'll be a sermon for another day. You can mark it that I'm planning to preach that sermon one day, and just know I'm coming back to it to get to the different soils.

[15 : 32] For right now, we're just going to look at this at a high level. Okay? A high level. So what is the parable of the sower mean? I have three things it means. Number one, it means this. It means that the kingdom is present in the preaching of the word.

It means that the kingdom is present in the preaching of the word or gospel. Okay? All right. So Matthew chapter 13, verse three says, and he spoke many things to them in parables saying, behold, the sower went out to sow.

Right? And he sowed seeds and we get into it in verse four. Let's, let's move on then to verse 18. Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, what he's doing is he's connecting that the sower sows the seed.

The seed that is sown is the message of the kingdom, the word of the kingdom. So the sower, which I would make the case is Jesus. That's the case that I would make, but he's sowing seed.

The seed that he's sowing is the message of the kingdom, the word of the kingdom, the gospel message. That's what the seed is. And so what we're seeing here then is we have to change our minds a little bit about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven.

[16 : 51] Sometimes what we do is we get this notion that the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven is something future and in a, in a particular place. That the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God is just simply something in the future and something that's in a particular place.

Well, let me look at a couple of passages with you just real briefly, kind of give a fuller picture of the kingdom and bring all these together. Luke chapter 22, verse 15, 16, Jesus is talking to his disciples about the last supper.

And he says to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say to you, I shall never eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

So he's got some sort of future view of the kingdom of God in this passage. Agreed? There's something future there. Okay, now let's move on. Matthew 12, 28, Jesus is casting out demons and people are all upset about it.

So he says, if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. For Jesus in that moment, the kingdom of God was a present reality, which means for us, it's a past thing.

[18 : 04] Yet that we know there's also future. Okay, so that's going to start pulling this together. John chapter 18, verse 36, Jesus is standing before Pontius Pilate and says, my kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not of this realm. Now, in denying that his kingdom has a physical aspect to it and that it is a spiritual kingdom, he's making sure we understand it's a kingdom that presently existed at that moment.

Otherwise, there would be no servants to come rescue him. Okay, Colossians chapter 1, verse 13, Paul writing to the church at Colossae. He says, for he rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son.

And so you have Paul who's letting us know that at present there is a kingdom to be transferred into. So what we have then is we have the kingdom of God has a past, a present, and a future.

It has a past to us. It has a present reality with us. It has a future glory for us. And the kingdom's presence, the kingdom's presence in this parable is connected and tied with the sowing of the seed.

[19 : 31] The kingdom has a sowing seed part of the kingdom phase, and it has a harvest time phase. And so long as the kingdom is in the sowing phase, that is when the preaching of the gospel needs to be had.

In other words, look at this parable and you say, what's the primary action happening in this parable? The sower is sowing the seed. The primary thing, the primary activity of the kingdom of God is the preaching of the gospel.

The preaching of the gospel is the means of expanding the kingdom of God. One day, the preaching is going to be over. Because harvest time is coming and the consummation of the kingdom will come.

But until that day, until that day, the preaching of the word is the presence of the kingdom.

So, Christians, what this means is that kingdom work is done solely by the preaching of the gospel. Let me say that again. Kingdom work is done solely by the preaching of the gospel.

[20 : 44] The gospel. There are all kinds of things that we can be involved in. All kinds of things that we can do. All kinds of kind, nice, service, things we can do to all kinds of people.

But there is nothing that will save a soul except the preaching of the gospel. As a matter of fact, we could give food to anybody and everybody that we wanted to.

We could load up with as much food as we could possibly handle, giving it out to everybody with need and everybody without need. And not a single meal will convert a soul.

Even an atheist could walk around this community and hand out every single meal they possibly could. But it will not be kingdom work because the gospel is not present.

Without the preaching of the gospel, there is no kingdom work. That's the thing we've got to get into our minds. And here's why. Because we need to be about the preaching of the gospel.

[21 : 51] And here's what I'm convinced of. If you're a part of the preaching of the gospel more than you think you are. You're a part of the preaching of the gospel more than you think you are.

And maybe there's room for improvement. But I'm just saying there's things that we're already doing. To be about this thing of preaching the gospel for the kingdom.

Let me just say this. Every Sunday, when you order your life by the preaching of the gospel, you're involved. In the preaching of the gospel.

You know, you're going to go on vacation. You're visiting family. But on Sunday, you order your life by the preaching of the gospel. Then you're involved. In the preaching of the gospel. When you pray.

For the preaching on Sundays. For the preaching of the word on Sundays. Then you're involved. In the preaching. Of the gospel. when you invite people to hear the preaching of the word, then you're involved in the preaching of the gospel.

[22 : 50] When you give money for people in other churches, overseas, who are attempting to preach the gospel there, when you give to them, when you give to missions, you are involved in the preaching of the gospel.

You're involved in the preaching of the gospel, even when you take and you share the gospel with someone or you hand them a gospel tract or you ask them the gospel questions that we learned this past summer.

When you invite someone to an event in which we're going to hand out tracts or we are going to share the gospel with them at this place, then you're involved in the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. And this is the way kingdom work is done. And so long as we are involved in the preaching of the gospel, we have the promise of the Great Commission that the incarnate, perfect, crucified, resurrected, ascended, ruling, reigning Christ who has all authority in heaven on earth has promised, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

The kingdom of God is present in the preaching of the word. The second thing about the parable of the sower that it means is that the message of the kingdom is going to be rejected by most. The message of the kingdom is going to be rejected by most. Let's look at it. Matthew chapter 13, verse 4 says, and as he sowed, some seeds fell upon the road and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places where they did not have much soil. And immediately they sprang up because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns and the thorns came up and choked them out.

Now that's the parable. He gives the explanation of it when you get to verse 19 through 22. Here's the explanation. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

[25 : 16] The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places. This is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no firm root in himself, but he is only temporary. And when affliction of persecution arises because of the word, he immediately falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. The preaching of the gospel will not yield a hundred percent acceptance rate in the world of the wicked. Some will reject it because they don't understand. That's the hard path. Some will reject it because they can't stand the suffering and persecution that comes with following Christ. That's the rocky soil. Some will reject it because the things of this world are more valuable to them than the things of Christ.

That's the thorny soil. And if people reject the gospel, then they reject Christ and they're not a part of his kingdom. Let me just say this. It may be a little bit more clear path. As you read these four soils, three of them are lost. Only one is really a Christian. To believe the gospel is to believe what God has said about you, to believe what he says about redemption. So a person who rejects that, well, wide is the road that leads to destruction. And perhaps today you're not a Christian. Perhaps you're one of those that you're on that wide road because the things of this world are more valuable to you than the things of Christ. What will you do come judgment day? Your only hope is to turn to Christ.

And Christians, here's the thing we need to understand. We say to ourselves, okay, that's great. We're going to be a part of the preaching of the word. I'm going to pray for the preaching of the word. And I'm going to, I'm going to be sure and hand out some tracts. I'm going to learn those gospel questions. But, but, but pastor, I'm not seeing anybody get saved.

A lot of people are going to reject it. The problem is not the gospel. The problem is not the cross. The problem is not even our approach. The problem is with the person that we're speaking with.

The problem is in them. Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, speaking about his own ministry, said something pretty disturbing and profound.

[27 : 56] He's using the image of the temple where you offer incense upon the altar of incense. And that the ministry he's doing is like incense being offered up to God.

But it's in the presence of, of all kinds of people. So all kinds of people get to hear that message or they get to smell the aroma of that ministry that he's doing. And it's interesting because Paul says this, he says in verse 15 of chapter two, he says, for we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

So this is the, the, the scope of it, right? He's got people who are saved on this side, people who are lost and perishing on this side. And as he offers the ministry of the preaching of the gospel, it is a fragrance of Christ going up to God, but everybody around him smells it.

And here's what he says to the one, it's an aroma from death to death and to the other, an aroma from life to life.

You see the very same message preached to one is life and to another death. And I don't understand all that that means, but I do understand this, that Paul says, who's adequate for these things?

[29 : 15] And he would tell us, don't give up with our eyes. We see and we feel as though like, man, so many people reject this. Nobody's really turning, but here's the thing. Success in preaching of the gospel has nothing to do with the number of converts that we have.

It has to do with the faithfulness we are to the gospel. So I would say to you, know the gospel, know the gospel, know how to share the gospel, because it is your duty to share the gospel.

I won't do very much to try to bind your conscience to much. I try to be very careful with from the word to not bind your conscience to so many things.

I want to be sure it's from the word, but I'm confident that here I'm on solid ground to say your conscience ought to be bound, that it is your duty to share the gospel.

It is not optional. But it can be very discouraging. It can be so discouraging because as you try and try and you feel like they're not listening, they're not listening, just know Jesus has already told us that will be the case.

[30 : 24] So never give up and never give out. Never give over. Never turn back. Preach the gospel. The last thing about this parable is that the message of the kingdom will be extremely fruitful in some.

It will be extremely fruitful in some. Verse 8 is the end of the parable. He says, And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and brings forth some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

The explanation of that comes in verse 23. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and brings forth some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Some soil is good soil. There are some who will believe, Why is it good soil? Because it's a heart that's been plowed by the Holy Spirit, preparing it for the gospel message.

It's been cultivated by God. And the point is, is that those who believe will bear fruit. It's cause and effect.

[31 : 43] I went to my daughter's house this weekend because her car was having trouble. You press the gas, it wouldn't go. We change out the spark plugs. We turn it on.

We press the gas, it goes. Cause and effect. You do this, this will happen. If you're saved, you will bear fruit. If you're not bearing fruit, you're not saved.

It's that simple. Here's the good thing. The good thing is that, what is this fruit? It's this fruit of holiness. It's the fruit of the Spirit. It's fruit of mercy, fruit of justice. It's all kinds of fruit we could talk about here.

And what I find comforting is he says there's some hundred, some sixty, some thirty. Which means this. You're not looking at my life to say, Oh, well, I don't match the pastor, so I'm not really bearing fruit.

Wrong answer. That is not what you're doing. Some hundred, some sixty, some thirty. Some of us will bear a hundred fold in fruit and some thirty fold in fruit. Why is that?

[32 : 41] Because we're all at different stages. We're all at different places. You don't look at someone else to determine whether or not you're bearing fruit. You look at yourself five years ago and say, Am I bearing fruit?

Am I different? Think about the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. Take one of those, self-control. I figure that's what we struggle with the most.

Do you have more self-control today than you did two years ago because of the power of the Holy Spirit? And if you say to yourself, Oh, I have way more self-control today because I got in so much trouble.

That's not the same thing. But you have self-control because of the power of the Holy Spirit working in you to shape you, to mold you. Then that's fruit.

That's fruit. Christians, there will be some in which, as we share the gospel, they will produce fruit.

[33 : 49] So where that leaves us is this. That we have a job to do, and that job is to preach the gospel. And if you look at the world around you and you say, How can I make a difference in this world? Commit yourself to the preaching of the gospel.

Commit yourself to it. Pray for it. Demand the preaching of the gospel. Because that is the only hope for this world.

Let's pray.