

The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 11

Last week we studied the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*, which triggered a lot of internal discussion for me regarding what Jesus is truly saying in **Matthew 13**. As I continued to study the parables I realized that there was A LOT going on in this chapter and quite honestly I felt overwhelmed and in over my head. Both were true, I was overwhelmed and in over my head; BUT the Lord is faithful so we are going to get through this and learn more incredible mysteries about the Kingdom.

The first thing that I noticed is that all the parables in **Matthew 13** are related to an overall picture. In feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of these relationships, I was reminded that the role of the parables all comes down to destroying the delusion of religion—at least for those who have ears to hear. Yes, there is mercy in Jesus' speaking in parables from an accountability standpoint; but make no mistake, from a broad perspective His truth dismantles and demolishes the delusion of religion.

For those who do not have ears to hear, they will spin in their religious interpretations of **Matthew 13** and it will give them no true insight or understanding into the Kingdom of God. This spinning, for example looks like forcing the meaning of the parables to always be positive or to reflect a picture of how we perceive Heaven to look like on earth. Religion cuts people off from truly accessing what Jesus is saying through these stories and this reality saddens me. It is also one of the reasons why I get emotional at the end of these teachings when I repeat what Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" because I want everyone to have ears to hear, but they don't. If they did, when they heard these

parables they would respond to them. They would say, “Whoa! I’m a tare, my leaven is out of control, or I’m a smelly bad fish and I need to change my direction and do it different right now.” They would say, “Oh! There is NOTHING I can do to be valuable to God except just be His.” That response would indicate the parable was truly heard. Those who hear can change, those who don’t hear will not.

Keep in mind, since the day we are born, Jesus calls us to come out from among the world that has been corrupted by evil. He wants us to be different from the world and similar to Him.

2 Corinthians 6:17

Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don’t touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you.

John 15:19

The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.

So He wants us to change and leave behind what has been corrupted. He doesn’t want us to hold ourselves up next to each other so we can label ourselves and get in the appropriate line to accept the destiny we have earned or deserve. Jesus wants us to learn about the reality of what is taking place and take the appropriate actions of faith. This is the purpose of revealing the Kingdom, so that we will come

out from among unbelievers and come to Jesus.

You see what is unfolding before us in these parables is turning out to be really fascinating—truly mysterious yet incredibly sound and explainable. What Jesus is doing here in **Matthew 13** is similar to what He did more directly in **Matthew 5** with the Sermon on the Mount. The main message of the Sermon on the Mount was to expose religious hypocrisy and demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that we need a Savior. Jesus is explaining the same simple message in these parables, it is simply His mode of instruction that changes.

Because of the piece each parable plays in the overall message, and if I want the next several teachings to make any practical sense at all, we need to take a minute to go through an overview of the parables in **Matthew 13**. I had mentioned a minute ago that they are intimately related to each other. For example, the parables of *The Mustard Seed* and of *The Leaven* are actually nestled directly after the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*; yet, directly before the explanation Jesus gives regarding *The Wheat and the Tares*. This strongly leads me to believe that the three are all related. Noticing this detail is where I began to realize that we were dealing with a much bigger picture than I had originally imagined. Think of each parable in terms of an integral piece making up a global perspective on the Kingdom of Heaven and let me show you what I found:

-The parable of *The Sower and The Seed* (**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**) depicts the reality of the human heart and condition, which we picked apart and studied in great detail through the four types of soil.

- The parable of *The Wheat and the Tares* (**Matthew 13:24-30**) depicts the reality of the state of mankind as a whole on this earth, which we also studied in great detail last week.
- The parable of *The Mustard Seed* (**Matthew 13:31-32**) depicts the reality that Jesus created evil in the midst of His Kingdom displaying the necessity for evil as a tool to accomplish God's purposes in the hearts of man.
- The parable of *The Leaven* (**Matthew 13:33**) depicts the reality of the individual and how the "tool" of evil works to perfectly corrupt all three pecks of flour—represented in the heart,/soul, the mind, and the body (**Matthew 22:37**).
- The parable of *The Hidden Treasure* (**Matthew 13:44**) and *The Costly Pearl* (**Matthew 13:45-46**) depict God's love for us by putting a stake into the heart of religious delusion about our own goodness and any notion that we can do anything at all to be loveable.
- The parable of *The Dragnet* (**Matthew 13:47-50**) depicts the reality of how the Kingdom operates on the earth pulling in every kind of person both good and bad, from every kind of people group, like a fishing net. Yet, in spite of being dragged in by the net, there will still be a separation at the end between the called and the chosen.
- The parable of *The Householder* (**Matthew 13:52**) depicts the reality that we as true believers bring forth the old law and the new covenant under the light of the truth of God's redemption; and that as the Body of Christ (or the scribes), we are charged to give it away.

So each of these parables describe very real pieces of the Kingdom that contribute to understanding it as a whole. I also noticed that they were related to details that we happen to talk about ALL the time such as the Chosen, vessels of wrath, the *flesh* and the Spirit, the battlefield of the mind, the Devil, and more. This is very exciting because continuity, repetition, and consistency in the Word of God always strengthens the power of the truth which in turn strengthens our faith. This is cool!

The flip side of this excitement is that noticing this bigger picture and the meaning behind it exposed how I still, after all these years of seeking to allow my mind to be transformed, had God neatly contained in a box. You see, similar to most studies on these parables, I really DID want them to make perfect sense to us in terms of our optimistic, western, Christian point of view.

But, in that point of view, there was no room for consistency of Biblical imagery. In other words, I would have to ignore the way the images of birds, leaven, and Jesus planting an invasive weed, are treated in the Bible and give them a whole new “happy” meaning. That is something I just could not do despite the thickness of material doing so. How can we just overlook the reality that these details are not positive?

On top of that, I was flipping back through points I have made over the past several weeks about Jesus coming into the strongman’s house and binding him up to plunder his goods (**Matthew 12:29**) and the Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence and being taken by force (**Matthew 11:12; Luke 11:11**). My mind was filled with questions such as, “When Jesus said, ‘repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,’ He wasn’t talking about a Kingdom filled with demons—was He?” I went to

a mental cycle of, “Jesus brought the Kingdom, the Kingdom is God’s, God is good, the Kingdom should be good like Jesus who brought the Kingdom,” and so on. I was looking at God through the opening in the box that I put Him into and I needed to get Him out of there. As usual the truth sets us free so with the root goal of the parables in mind I re-embarked on defining the Kingdom.

So if the Kingdom of God was not what I had boxed it up to be, what is it? First, we must understand that the Kingdom is not a physical thing that “came to earth.” For instance, it has no borders, it can’t be put in a box, and there is nothing to physically grab a hold of. This is a spiritual kingdom that invades the physical world. This often gets overlooked. In the same way that my idea of Kingdom tended to put it in a box, so did the Jews. You see, for many centuries they were waiting for the Kingdom of the Messiah to be physically established on the earth. In their minds, the Messiah would come, kill or subject all the bad guys to His reign, and everything would then be fine and dandy. So when Jesus said the Kingdom of God is at hand, they were ready and waiting for the fireworks. They wanted to see the rule of Rome go down and see Israel established as the glory of all creation.

But the Kingdom that Jesus spoke of is first and foremost spiritual even though it becomes very tangible through the lives of those to whom the Kingdom belongs. For example, Jesus said that because He casts out demons and physically heals people that the Kingdom of God is at hand or is here (**Mark 1:15**). And in this passage “at hand” is rendered in the *perfect active indicative*. So without question, it has arrived.

In the Greek, the words “came” or “come” is a variant of the verb “to be.” This declares that the Kingdom of God “is” and is undeniably here with us. So, again, the

phrase “the Kingdom of God has come” does not refer to a physical thing; rather, it refers to a spiritual reality which invades the physical whereby Jesus systematically redeems all of creation (**Romans 8:18-25**) and methodically places it back under His rule and order. This Kingdom works within the physical construct altering everything it touches. For now, this work is done through the lives of those to whom the Kingdom belongs. They take the Kingdom with them wherever they go and Jesus does His work (spiritual and physical) in and through their lives. One great day when the spiritual overtakes the physical and they are one and the same, Jesus will come back and establish His physical rule on this earth (**Revelation 19:6; 11-21**), but until that time, from a visual standpoint it looks like Jesus being very active, through the lives of His people, making His enemies to be a footstool for His feet and preparing all things for His physical return. This is represented in this verse in **Hebrews**.

Hebrews 10:11-14

Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

So saying that the Kingdom of God “has come” or “is at hand” means that Jesus, living through His people, is gathering all who belong to Him until the time that He is ready to physically come and judge His enemies. The practical implications are

phenomenal. It means that His people live victoriously as they do His will and nothing, not even the gates of hell, can oppose them.

Matthew 16:18-19

Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."

So the Kingdom of Heaven is a very living and active realm where God rules over all things and is step by step acquiring dominion over all things. Another thing He does in this realm is divvy out portions of temporary power to the various enemies of our souls (the world, the Devil, our humanity). In doing this, He creates an environment that draws out those who will be in relationship with Him. He does this while still honoring His stipulation of maintaining our free will choice of who we will ultimately serve. In terms of the enemies of our souls having temporary power, this is clearly only a permitted rule with a very specific time allotted for them to play their part in the Lord's plan. But the Lord never gave up His rights or control over ALL things; He just let the enemies play the role of an enemy in order that He might accomplish His perfect purposes in His children and urge them to come out from unbelievers.

Now similar to a landlord and a tenant, Jesus only leases this temporary power

out to these enemies of our souls. For example, we can never forget the truth about the Lord's absolute rule and the devil's permitted rule as presented in ***Psalm 24:1***: "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it (see also ***1 Corinthians 10:26***). ***Revelation 11:15*** also states that when the seventh angel sounds, loud voices in heaven will say, "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." So evil embodied in the darkness of the world (the Devil and our own *flesh*) will have to submit their temporary power back to God after their appointed time to fulfill their roles is completed; and everyone, no matter what they believe, bows to the glory of Jesus (***Philippians 2:10***).

So that completes our brief overview of each part the parables plays in identifying and explaining the Kingdom bringing us full circle and back down on the microscope to the parable of *The Mustard Seed*.

Matthew 13:31–32

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR COME and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

When I was summarizing the point of each parable I stated the mustard seed and its growth into a tree is a symbol for the kingdom of the Devil. I made this distinction because of a few reasons. First, the mustard plant is a weed. It grows, spreads, and

over takes other plants very quickly. Its seeds blow everywhere and take root even in a crack in the cement, as it is very aggressive and invasive. The Jews specifically discussed how to handle the mustard plant in a written collection of Jewish oral law that had been passed down for generations called the *Mishnah*. Contained in the *Mishnah* is a section labeled the *Kil'ayim*, which dealt in particular with the laws forbidding certain kinds of production and uses of mixtures as provided in **Leviticus 19:19** and **Deuteronomy 22:9-11**. Specifically, this section discussed planting mixtures of seeds, grafting plants, mixing of vineyards, and various rules with crossbreeding animals. Particular to mustard, *Kil'ayim 3:2* states a prohibition on mixing field seeds (which include the mustard seed) with typical herb or garden seeds. The idea is that the aggressive nature of the field seeds would overcome the garden and choke everything else out.

Now in this parable, Jesus Himself plants this seed in His field, fully understanding the nature of this aggressive weed. I'm confident considering the man planting the mustard seed to be Jesus because the placement of this parable is grouped together with the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares* where He explains that He is the man who plants the field. Given this background information, this detail of deliberately planting a mustard seed in a field of crops would have sounded culturally ridiculous to people listening to the story because the *Mishnah* prohibited it. The bottom line is mustard is not a special or cherished plant, and you never plant it with anything you don't want it to overrun.

Another interesting point Jesus makes in the parable is that the mustard seed is "smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree." Culturally at that time, the mustard seed was used to indicate the smallest measure of size. The concept of the seed itself wasn't

necessarily spiritualized, but the metaphor about the seed was definitely used to convey spiritual realities when a measurement was necessary. We see an example of this in **Matthew 17:20** where Jesus explains that if one has faith even as small a mustard seed, they can move mountains. So the mustard seed was a metaphor for very small things. Again, it wasn't necessarily a spiritualized term like wheat was, for example back then one could describe a little child as a "mustard seed" simply because the child is small.

I believe Jesus chose to use this particular seed to describe the Kingdom of the Devil because although quite formidable, he is the least of our foes. A statement like that may sound like I am asking for trouble from the Enemy, but the reality is that he can only prey on what we give him to prey on through our wrong belief and unbelief. It is through those avenues that his kingdom does thrive and grow into a tree that is larger than the other plants. The Kingdom of the Devil is tenacious and very aggressive; it intimidates and seeks to control. As a weed, it increases in size very quickly stealing sunshine, water, and nutrients from the other plants. Similarly the Devil seeks to grow into and fill any space that is available, but he can only play off of our emotions and off of our circumstances and must wait for that opportunity. He has no real power to separate us from God as his days are numbered and he is just a tool functioning under the power and authority of God.

As a quick side note, if I have made you curious about the enemies of our soul by saying the Devil is the weakest of them, I will quickly mention that the most powerful of them holding the real capacity to separate us from God forever is ourselves (**Genesis 6:5**). The power that lives within the stubbornness of our *flesh* as it is connected to the self-seeking wisdom and pride of this world overshadows the power of the Devil's schemes. Of course he plays off of them and uses them as

weapons, but we are the ones who place those weapons in his hands by not believing or walking in truth. We will talk about this more when we discuss the parable of *The Leaven* but for now let's continue on with the mustard.

The second reason I make the distinction that the mustard tree is a symbol of the Kingdom of the Devil is because Jesus states that when it becomes a tree “the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” This is not the first time we have dealt with the birds of the air. We saw them stealing truth away on the hard path of our hearts in the parable of *The Sower and the Seed*. According to **Luke 8:12** we know that the birds are of the Devil. We also learned from our previous studies of the Kingdom that the Bible uses birds as a metaphor for demons (**Revelation 18:2; Mark 4:3-4,14-15; Matthew 13:4,19; Ephesians 6:12**). The demons in the parable of *The Mustard Seed* come to nest or dwell in the branches of the tree, which means the tree is their home—their abode. Demons don't make their home in a place where they are not comfortable. That is why they are repulsed by light—it makes them uncomfortable. Another thing I know, just as a simple gardener, is that you do not want most kinds of birds in your garden because they eat all the food. This is why people set up scarecrows in their fields, so that the birds will stay away. So based upon this information I do not see how we can avoid the reality that the mustard tree is not a good thing but is a representation of the Kingdom of the Devil housing demonic spirits.

With that in mind, it is Jesus who plants this seed and lets this “weed” grow and become a shelter for demonic spirits in the midst of His very own field (a field that is shared between those who are His (the wheat) and those who belong to the enemy (the tares). In the Old Testament, **Isaiah 45:7** and **54:16** we get a picture of this same concept using different metaphors.

Isaiah 45:7

The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity [**literally EVIL**]; I am the Lord who does all these.

Isaiah 54:16

I have created the blacksmith who fans the coals beneath the forge and makes the weapons of destruction. And I have created the armies that destroy.

Jesus planted this tree of evil and of course we want to understand why. Let's turn to another example of this kind of situation we find in the Bible in ***Romans 9***. This passage goes back to the story of Moses and Pharaoh. Moses acts as a type of the ultimate deliverer (Jesus) and Pharaoh acts as a type of the Devil. We can view Egypt as a type of the Devils kingdom (the world); and Pharaoh (the Devil) enslaves and mistreats God's people. But with regard to Pharaoh, God said that He raised Him up to demonstrate His power so His name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. Pharaoh had no independent rule just like Satan has no independent rule. God planted Him in the garden and let this weed grow.

Romans 9:14-25

What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND

I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

Similarly, Jesus planted this Mustard Tree (Satan) for us in order to use it to make His power known to us. He uses it to help us identify with and understand His glory upon us as His vessels of mercy. In both of these examples, with Pharaoh and the mustard tree, the reality is that the evil has been necessary to accomplish that drawing out from the unbelievers those that will be perfected creating a clear distinction between the religious and the righteous. Thus, as we discussed earlier during the beginning of this teaching, as a result of the presence of the mustard tree we are commanded to come out from among the unclean (all that is corrupted

by evil) and be separate—or to live as those who have been chosen by **Jehovah Mekoddishkem (2 Corinthians 6:16-18)**. The garden that God is developing us into is ultimately not to be comingled with the things of this world.

A part of this “coming out” and refusal to be comingled is represented in **Matthew 13:52** through the parable of *The Householder*, which we will study in more detail later. Basically, this represents us bringing forth the old law and the new covenant under the light of the truth that Jesus is making **ALL THINGS NEW**; and these words are faithful and true (**Revelation 21:5**). In light of this, nothing is exempted from this reality. In other words, nothing from this realm will last. We will get *new* bodies to go with our *new* nature, which we have already been given (**1 Corinthians 15:34-54; Ephesians 4:22**). Our *new* self will be perfect and will operate in the *new* heaven and the *new* earth. In other words, in the meaning of all these parables, there is NO VALUE in the system of religion. There is no value in anything you or anyone can do for God. It is all worthless and has all necessarily been corrupted by evil to prove out this point. This is a raw truth. The Mustard Tree was planted for the purpose of drawing out those whom God has made righteous, but when it is all said and done, this tree and everything connected to it will be destroyed.

To summarize, it is important that we look at this through the big picture. The Kingdom of Heaven on earth uses all that is corrupted—even us—which explains why everything has to be new. I’m corrupted and you’re corrupted. The corrupt enemies of our soul are always out to destroy the works of God. Humanity is in a constant state of corrupting itself from God. But God’s ultimate goal is redemption. He creates the perfect environment for redemption to be possible. Therefore, His

Kingdom lives in the midst of, and moves within all things: wheat, tares, the mustard tree, leaven, hidden treasure, and more, so that our full redemption from corruption can be a possibility. And He graciously makes a way for us to function in this place while He is making all things new by providing us a *New Creation* where we can dwell in and operate from while we are charging forward with time.

What a fascinating yet completely legitimate drama that plays out around us all the time. We will pick up next week with the parable of *The Leaven*.

He who has ears, let him hear.

Let's pray.