

Week 14

Matthew series: Ministry of Jesus

Matthew 13 The religious atmosphere part 3

I'm going to call this chapter the scattered seed chapter. To this point, we have instruction, prophecy, and revelation. All three of these things are wrapped together in the Christ. Who is he? The Old testament talks of this man but the Israelite nation did not know for sure what this Christ would look like. What would he do? Where would he come from? If you re-read Matthews first 12 chapters we see the authorities confused over where this Christ should come from. From Harrod to the Magi they all were searching, dissecting, and interpreting the scriptures, traditions, and rumors. The scattered seeds are all these hints of Jesus first coming. What have you heard in the past about Jesus?

Matthew 13:9 **"Whoever has ears, let them hear."**

Matthew 11:9 **"Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet."**

I wondered if I should call this lesson the religious atmosphere. This is about kingdom talk, parables, and sowing seed. Yet, that is the atmosphere of the day. The people meant to read this book were Jewish. They knew the Old Testament well. Possibly too well. It had become bla bla to them because of poor religious observance and teaching. It is by no mistake that Matthew quotes Isaiah, Daniel, Jerimiah, and others. They were all warning of the same thing. They see but don't see. They hear but don't hear. Matthew 13 is a final warning to the readers. Listen or perish. I think why Matthew quotes so many prophets is to prove they did not listen to these men they idolized. I am sure you have heard good phrases or words in the past. Did you listen to them?

Matthew 13:14 **"In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.'"**

Jerimiah 5:21 **"Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear."**

This whole chapter is about listening. It's about believing. Matthew wants people to believe in Jesus. Yet, he knows the religious climate. They were blind and tone deaf. The wheat, weeds, and seed represent the words of God spoken through the prophets of old. This word was scattered all over Israel. Yet, the fruit, crops, and harvest of this seed was minimal. In many ways the bad religion was the weeds and thorns choking the harvest. Also, the hearts of the people had gone hard. I wonder if the occupation of Babylonia and then Rome had crushed the hearts of the nation. They were captives. God said he would be their God. Where was God? I think Jesus came at exactly the right time. People needed hope, faith, and renewed belief in their God. I think that's exactly why Jesus made the illustration of the mustard seed. Israel was small, but meant for greater things. Jesus came to till the soil and shake the leaves. It was time for the return of the Kingdom.

Matthew 13:24 "Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."

Deuteronomy 32:9 "For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance."

Read Matthew 13. Check out Matthew 4. Jesus is tempted with food, power, and safety. Matthew quotes another piece of Isaiah in verse 16. In some ways Matthew 13 takes chapter 4 farther. Extra reading, try Isaiah 19, Deuteronomy 29:4, Ezekiel 17:23, and Dan 4:12

1. (Matthew 13:1-17) Revelation 3:6 says *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Throughout the Last book of the Bible is this statement. Theoretically the writer of that book had not read Matthew. Matthew at that time was a group of stories. Matthew supposedly pulled these stories together to tell his version of the Jesus story. Yet, this saying must mean something. In the Old Testament it is said several times in Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Jerimiah, and more.

Matthew uses this chapter as a gateway to the rest of the book. It says that the disciples could see and hear what Jesus was saying. Paul, a writer of other Bible books talked about a mystery to be revealed. The Greek word for mystery can be parable. Hard understandings. What is the mystery? Paul explains it is the revealing of the Christ. Matthew has been meticulously revealing the Christ from page one.

Matthew 13:10 "Then the disciples came and asked him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

Exodus 3:14 "od said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

2. (Matthew 13:18-43) This is the theme of the farm. On a farm are the worker, harvester, sower of seed, and others. Also on a farm are crops and weeds. Verse 30 is controversial to me. Jesus says let the weeds and wheat grow together. I preached at a church where a man told us that we should avoid the weeds. I believe Jesus. Yet, it makes no sense to live with the dregs of this world. They presumably hate God. I can see Jesus is more concerned about the good soil, the good crops, and good intentions of his workers on the farm. I don't think Jesus is weary of the weeds.

Don't you find it interesting that Jesus is talking about the kingdom and not the earth. Jesus focus is on what will be rather than what is. Again, Jesus is asked after all his teaching to

explain himself. Again, he uses the verses pertaining to *let the people see and hear*. I think this is the frustrated God and Jesus. The word was given in the Old testament. The way to heaven was there. Yet, clearly, the people were not getting it. Their soil was hard. They were blind, deaf, and hard in heart. It's the same message spoken to Pharaoh as it was to the religious of Jesus day. Those who could hear (wheat) and those how could not (weeds).

Matthew 13:30 "Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Exodus 11:9 "The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you--so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt."

3. (Matthew 13:44-58) The last verse ends with "because of their unbelief." In the churches, towns, cities, countryside, and even Jesus own home town there was unbelief. After all the Israelites had been through over thousands of years, they never grew. Their ground was still hard and un-tilled. Jesus goes into a set of small explanations describing the kingdom. They are not even deep parables. They are more like analogies. *The Kingdom is...* It's should have been so easy to recognize the treasure and keep it. Gather the fish and throw out the bad. Later on, a man refuses to see his treasure to gain heaven (Matthew 19). A woman talks about scattering pearls to pigs (Matthew 13). Judas receives money to betray Jesus. The rulers take the coins and buy a field of blood (Matthew 27). Matthew is a smart writer. I believe he saw Jesus in the words and actions. He could see and hear. Again, this is Matthew asking the people to see and hear what they missed the first time. The kingdom is heard in Jesus the Christ.

Matthew 13: 58 "And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief."
Zephaniah 3:8 ""Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD, "For the day when I rise up as a witness Indeed, my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal."

4. (Matthew 13) I have always lived by a saying that "work is the sustainer for what we were really meant to do." You could alter that and substitute God for work. Look at Matthew 13 closely. It's about crops. It's about kingdom. It's about community, understanding, and the truth. All these things have been the fabric of the lives we lead. We were born in community. We are given food, shelter, and work to do. Nothing has changed for thousands of years. People today say God is dead. That has been said many times before. If Jesus was God, then he died on a cross.

If he is resurrected then that changes everything. The kingdom just might still be heard. The word just might still mean something. They knew verses like Zechariah 7:8-14. Those verses plead with the people to listen before it's too late. Matthew 13 talks at great length about two scenarios. One is collecting treasure. That treasure could be God's word, blessings, or people. The other side is pulling up weeds, ignoring warnings (God's word), and casting people aside. Jesus hometown ignored 30 years of God growing up among them. Surely Jesus gave hints from time to time. Mary hinted of that at Jesus first miracle. What is scary is those closest to God not believing. How tragic is that.

Matthew 13:42-43 **“and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”**

Jerimiah 6:10 **“To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.”**

What it all means?

If I met you on the street and told you about a complete stranger, you should understand perfectly without even meeting him, right? Of course not, that is pure nonsense. Christians for two thousand years have been telling people to trust, obey, and follow a man named Jesus without even meeting him. In the Gospels we have story after story of someone telling others about Jesus. Several times Jesus himself tells people not to talk about him. Why? It's because what the Christ does in a heart will tell way more.

I know of many people who saw the good actions of Jesus followers and wanted to join. Unbelief is changed because a heart is changed. Matthew also repeats many times that people were surprised or impressed with what they heard about Jesus. To be a real Christian is to do rather than open our mouths. It's not that we can't explain or tell the truth about Jesus. It's just that seeing is believing. Seeing a life changed is powerful.

What Matthew 13 means is that we are to go and tell. We are to go and preform good deeds. The same way Jesus did for us. We are to tell the stories of Gods good news. That the kingdom is near. Those that experienced Jesus told about Jesus. They did things that God would want done. People see that. They are curious. The wheat and weeds are a final warning. What will you be in religion. What will your knowledge of Christianity look like to others. Will you just boast about a man they do not know? Will you boast about a man you experienced? Jesus sells himself. Sell to others that we have been sold for a price on a cross. Let them see the hands and feet of Jesus in your life.

Matthew 13:54 **“Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.”**

Exodus 14:31 **“And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.”**