



Unit .25

Session .01

## Jesus Tells the Kingdom Parables

Scripture



**Matthew 13:1-9,  
31-33,44-46**

**1** On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. **2** Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore. **3** Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “Consider the sower who went out to sow. **4** As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn’t have much soil, and it grew up quickly since the soil wasn’t deep. **6** But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it. **8** Still other seed fell on good ground and produced fruit: some a hundred, some sixty, and some thirty times what was sown. **9** Let anyone who has ears listen.” ... **31** He presented another parable

to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. **32** It’s the smallest of all the seeds, but when grown, it’s taller than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the sky come and nest in its branches.” **33** He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and mixed into fifty pounds of flour until all of it was leavened.” ... **44** “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. **45** “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. **46** When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had and bought it.

**What are some characteristics of a heart receptive to the good news of the gospel? How would you characterize the other types of soil Jesus describes in the parable?**

**Which of the three soils described in this parable have you experienced when sharing the gospel? Explain.**



## 99 Essential Doctrines

### Church and Kingdom

The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the reign of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God's kingdom in the future. The church's mission is to witness to God's kingdom, proclaiming God's message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the gospel through good works so that others may be brought to live under God's reign.

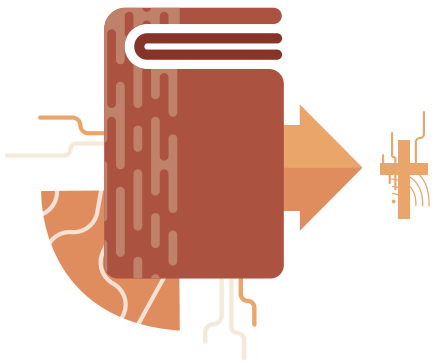
## Main Point

**Jesus' parables teach us what the kingdom of heaven is like.**

**What are some other biblical stories you can think of where God took something (or someone) little and turned it (or the person) into a testimony of His own greatness?**

**What are some temporary joys we try to find lasting satisfaction in today? Why is Jesus better than these?**

**What rivals Christ for the number one place in your heart? How can you place Him first in every area of your life?**



## Christ Connection

Jesus used parables to describe the nature of God's kingdom on earth. Word of the kingdom is sown broadly and will be received differently based on the condition of one's heart. For those with hearts of fertile soil, the word yields extraordinary fruitfulness causing the kingdom to grow and extend into all of the world. When Jesus returns, we will experience the full manifestation of God's kingdom.



## Head

**Which of the three parables discussed stands out to you most? Why?**

**How does the parable of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price challenge us to think differently about where true and ultimate satisfaction and joy are found?**



## Heart

**How does the parable of the four soils challenge us on a personal level?**

**What are some ways we can cultivate our hearts in hopes that God's Word would fall on good soil when we hear it?**

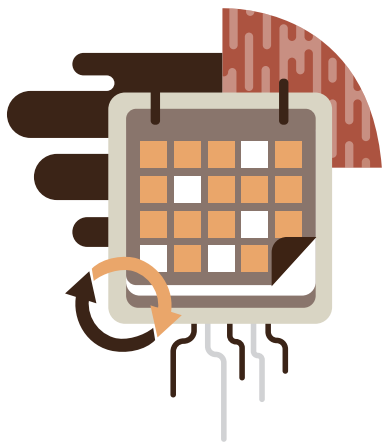


## Hands

**How does the parable of the four soils offer encouragement to us even when we may not see the kingdom growing at a rate we would like?**

**What part do we play in God's plan of growing the kingdom? How can we be more active in that role this week?**

# Daily Devotions



Day 1

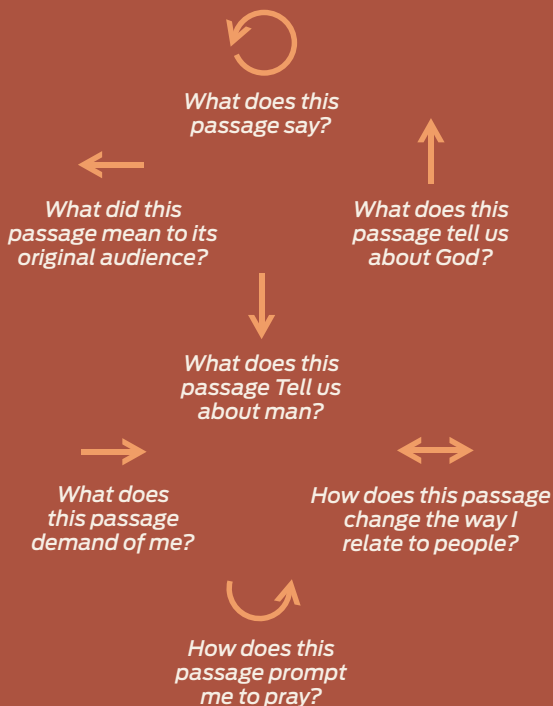
## Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Life is full of cares and worries that can potentially steal your joy in Christ, if left unsubmitted to His care. You may not even be going through anything especially difficult, anything “big,” but the danger to get off mission is always there. In fact, it may be during times of relative ease that we are most in danger since suffering and hardship typically have a way of pushing us closer to God in faith.

So think of your day, your week, and your upcoming plans or obligations. They could feel perfectly routine or ordinary. But in your preoccupation and planning, are you forgetting to meditate on God’s Word, to pray honestly to Him, and to apply His Word to your life?

One thing these kingdom parables help us do is see everyday life with spiritual resonance. Things in the news or in the neighborhood may look bleak, but Christ upholds the universe. His plan will be fulfilled. The proliferation of evil seems inevitable, but Christ’s church is continuing and will continue to bear fruit.

### The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



**What daily steps do you take to make sure the thorns of daily life do not choke out the seed of the kingdom in your life?**

# Matthew 13:10-17

It was an odd thing to say about these stories, wasn't it? Jesus said that He used parables just as much for obscuring as for unveiling, as much for concealing as for revealing.

This is a reminder, first of all, that truly seeing the kingdom of God depends upon God's revealing power. Think of Paul's enlightening words in Romans 8:7.

Second, however, these words are another reminder of just how polarizing the person and work of Christ is today. It explains why when you share the gospel with one friend, he or she leans in to know more, and when you share with another, he or she becomes uncomfortable or offended. The message is the same, but the way it "lands" on people can be different.

This is a reminder to even believers that when our minds are set constantly on the cares of the world—on pleasure, on accumulation, on popularity or reputation—we can miss the work of the kingdom in our midst.

**How can you be more mindful of the reality of the kingdom in your everyday life?**

# Matthew 13:24-33

It seems counterintuitive to keep the two main thoughts of these two kingdom parables together, but doing so can be an immense encouragement to us. First, the parable about the wheat and the tares is a caution to the church that just because someone identifies as a Christian or with the Christian religion doesn't mean he or she has become a converted believer in Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself affirmed that unbelievers will be masquerading as believers—often self-deceived about their spiritual state due to their affiliation—until the end of the age.

You would think, then, that any growth of the church should strike us as suspicious. If the wheat and tares grow side by side until the end, the number of the "wheat" must end up depressingly lower than expected. Yet the second parable tells us that the kingdom will continue to grow and flourish. At the end of days, there will be an innumerable count of genuine believers eager to worship Christ for all eternity (Rev. 7:9).

**What does the parable of the wheat and the tares mean for your understanding of the church and your expectations for its purity?**

# Matthew 13:34-43

It is not popular these days to speak of hell. Certainly in the wider culture the very assumptions that give rise to religious perspectives on afterlife have long since fallen out of favor. Hell in America is more of a curse word than a real danger that has faced every person who ever lived.

In Matthew 13:34-43, Jesus points to a stark truth that every person must reckon with: there is such a thing as “evil” and such a thing as “lawlessness,” and the end result for both is a place of eternal conscious torment. Hell is real, and it will be a place of unending and excruciating judgment, the unending experience of God’s wrath.

In the light of this important truth, the last line of Jesus’ exposition of the parable is gripping: “Let anyone who has ears listen.”

**How often do you think of hell?  
How does knowing hell awaits every  
unrepentant sinner motivate you in  
prayer and evangelism?**

# Matthew 13:44-58

In this passage, we see just how polarizing the gospel of Jesus is. We who believe in Jesus know the gospel truly is good news! It announces our only hope of forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the gift of eternal life. Who wouldn’t want that?

Well, it turns out that plenty of people want nothing to do with the kingdom and all the blessings that come with it. At the end of Matthew 13, just as Jesus had been foretelling or saying through His parables, the people in His very hometown rejected Him. They were offended by Him.

One reason for their rejection was their inability to fathom how anything mighty of God could come from their own surroundings. They knew Jesus’ family. They knew His earthly father’s trade. They could not see how any of that could amount to anything glorious.

The truth for today is that Christ plans to redeem everything we see. He can (and will) take what is ordinary and use it for His own glory. Just as He Himself came in a poor, ordinary family—born even in a feeding stall—Jesus is still using ordinary, unassuming people to spread His kingdom throughout the world.

**What do the circumstances of Jesus’  
birth and upbringing say about God’s  
plans and priorities?**