

## Parables and Healings

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We have spent some wonderful time listening to Jesus preach over the last two weeks! This week we will continue to follow along with him, listening and watching all he says and does. We've gotten used to his straight forward sermons on the traits most pleasing to our Father. This week marks a transition in his manner of teaching. Our first couple of scripture passages this week will be parables Jesus told about the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus often used parables to illustrate the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. Imagine trying to describe a foreign place to someone who had never been there before. That is exactly what Jesus was trying to do. Jesus made comparisons to something familiar in order to explain something unfamiliar. By using everyday activities and relationships as illustrations Jesus was able to teach spiritual truths about the Kingdom of Heaven. Those honestly seeking to understand about the Kingdom of Heaven would hear the parable and the spiritual truth would become clear. On the other hand, those who were following Jesus, but not sincerely seeking the truth Jesus came to share with the world, would come away thinking they had just heard a little story or proverb but missing out on what Jesus was truly teaching. The true meaning was thus hidden from them because their hearts weren't open to receiving the spiritual truth of the kingdom.

This week we will look at the parables of The Four Soils, and The Wheat and the Weeds. Then we will shift gears and take a look at some of Jesus' most profound healings. It will be an interesting week, and I'm so glad to be able to share this journey of better knowing Jesus with you!

### Knowledge of the Secrets of the Kingdom

*Matthew 13: 10-17*

Before we start with the parables, I think some understanding of *why* Jesus was teaching in parables would be helpful. We are going to jump right into the middle of Jesus' discourse on the parable of the Four Soils. We will look more closely at the parable later. For now I want us to focus on the *why* and *who* of the parables. Let's take a few minutes to pray before we jump right in. Lord, I lift up this dear lady who has been so faithful in her studies. I pray that you will continue to bless her understanding of who you are and how much you love her. Help her to open the eyes and ears of her heart as she studies your word this week. Reveal your truth to her and help her to live it whole heartedly!

*“Who do you say I am?”*

## Lesson 6 Homework



Turn in your Bible to Matthew 13:10-17. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

Why were Jesus' words veiled from some of the people gathered to listen to him? Let's put this passage in context and figure out who was in the crowd. We will go back into some of the passages just prior to Matthew 13:10. Write a few words describing timing as mentioned in the beginning of each verse below.

- Matt 13:1
- Matt 12:46
- Matt 12:38

Which group of people had Jesus been disputing with within the crowd?

Jesus' parable falls close on the heels of a dispute with the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law. According to the commentaries, Jesus begins teaching in parables for a few reasons. First, they are a way to illustrate a spiritual truth. The second reason has a level of judgment in it aimed at those who *refuse* to hear the truth. Returning to our passage of study today, verse 10 tells us that the disciples asked Jesus why he was teaching in parables. Jesus response is a bit cryptic at first.

Write verse 11:

Why are the secrets of the kingdom of heaven not revealed to everyone? And who do you think is the “not to them”?

Write verse 12:



What do you think the words “has” and “have” refer to? What do the disciples have that the “they” from the preceding verse do not?

Jesus is telling the disciples that they, and anyone else who has heard and understood what Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, "has" some understanding of spiritual matters and "will be given more" understanding, and in "abundance". Jesus will continue to teach in parables which will be unclear to those *without* understanding, but to those with *some* understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven, the meaning of the parables will become increasingly clear. Whoever does not have an understanding, are those who have rejected Jesus and his teaching. They will not understand, and what little they may have understood at one point, will eventually be meaningless to them because they have rejected Jesus.

The third reason behind Jesus teaching in parables lies behind verse 13. It has to do with the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. "*The wicked generation*" – those professing a life devoted to God yet rejecting the truth of God and the love of God are the ones Isaiah is talking about. Of what does Isaiah accuse this "*wicked generation*"?

What does "*understand with their hearts and turn*" mean?

What does God say he would do if they would hear and obey the truth?

Jesus speaks the words of verses 16 and 17 to his disciples. These words are for you too. They are for all of us who are willing to hear and obey the truth that Jesus speaks. It is not enough to know the truth, we must live it every day of our lives with Jesus abiding in our heart. If Jesus is not there, then something else will fill that swept clean house and turn us away from him. Read verses 16 and 17 and know that Jesus is speaking these words to you.

## The Parable of the Four Soils

*Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23*

In the previous section we saw that this day for Jesus has been a long one! It began early on the Sabbath with him and his disciples picking wheat on the Sabbath back in Matthew 12:1. After which Jesus and his disciples went to the synagogue where he healed a crippled man. Crowds gathered around him to hear him teach and the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law gathered to verbally attack and argue with him. Our lesson today begins with "*That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.*" I can only imagine how weary and warm it must have been, yet Jesus continues ministering and teaching to all who come to hear him. As we noted

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above, Jesus begins teaching in parables, one of the reasons he does so is because his ministry is beginning to focus more closely upon those who truly are seeking the truth that he came to share. He is still dogged by the Pharisees and those who seek spectacle rather than truth. Teaching in parables allows Jesus the opportunity to illustrate difficult and heretofore unknown truths about the Kingdom of Heaven to those who are open to receiving truth. Chapter 13 of Matthew is something of a turning point in Jesus ministry. His focus is on reaching those with open hearts to receive truth.



Let's turn our attention to today's scripture passage. If you haven't done so already, say a little prayer to the Lord asking him to reveal the spiritual gems hidden in this parable. How he loves to honor a sincere request for understanding his Word! God bless you as you continue your study today! Read Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23 and answer the following questions.

Into what various places did the seed fall?

Whom did Jesus liken to seed along the path? Why?

According to Christ, who is like the seed sown on rocky soil? Why?

What kind of people was compared to seed sown among the thorns? Why?



Of whom is the fruitful seed a picture? How? (13:23)

Who do you think is the sower?

What are some thorns that tend to choke out your Christian faith? What circumstances have a tendency to scorch your faith and cause it to wither?

Rejecting Jesus is not a matter of lack of information. As this parable illustrates, anyone who hears the message of the kingdom has to make a choice either to accept or reject Jesus. Accepting Jesus is more than a casual response. It is one that must be guarded, nurtured, deepened and strengthened. It must be tended. How do we do that? Spending time in the Word

of God, spending time in prayer, surrounding ourselves with relationships with others who have the same priority to honor God. Living according to the Law, according to how Jesus tells us to live in the kingdom of God here and now. Choosing to accept Jesus requires a heartfelt response, it requires obedience and action. It is not a passive acceptance. We cannot just say, "Yes, Jesus, I accept your offer of forgiveness and the Kingdom of Heaven," and then go on without making changes in our lives honoring God. A passive acceptance will allow the birds to come and eat the seeds of faith. It will not allow strong roots of faith to develop. It will allow the thorns of this worldly life to choke out faith. An active acceptance allows that seed to grow strong and healthy, and produce more seeds of faith to be sown after it. As we cultivate that seed of belief in God's kingdom, we will produce seeds to be sown around us.

## The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds

*Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*

I've always enjoyed studying parables. They are like little puzzles that when you figure them out you are rewarded with a gem of truth regarding the Kingdom. We will dig into one more parable this week. It follows the one we just looked at and is very much a companion story to it. Let's say a little prayer requesting the Lord to unveil a new gem to us today. Lord, this dear lady earnestly seeks to understand your word and we pray that you will teach us about your Kingdom and show us how to take what we learn today and carry it forth into the world to share with others.



Let's join Jesus and his followers and listen to the parable he has to share with us. Turn in your Bible to Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43. Read the passages and answer the following questions.

In the Parable of the Weeds, who did the sower represent? How?

What did the field represent? In what way?

What groups of people are illustrated by good seed and weeds?

Who does the enemy who sowed the bad seed represent?

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## Lesson 6 Homework

What future event is symbolized by the harvest and the burning of the weeds? What does 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 say in relation to this parable?

What will happen to those who are thrown "into the fiery furnace"?

Jesus tells us that he is the sower of good seed, and the field is the world in which he sows the seeds of the Gospel. Just as in the previous parable, the good seed are believers who mature to bear good fruit, also sowing good seed. Jesus describes the time frame of the Kingdom of Heaven in this parable. The parables cover a period of time beginning with Jesus ministry on earth and the spreading the Gospel by believers throughout the Church Age until his Second Coming. It is the time between his two advents. The Harvest represents Jesus' return to judge creation and establish the Messianic Kingdom at the "End of the Age".

This parable reveals something else to us. The Devil has come in to sow his own seed among the good seeds of the Son of Man. They are the weeds and thorns that grow up to choke the good seed. In the Kingdom of Heaven, here on Earth, believers must coexist with non-believers until the end of the age. At the end of the Age the parable tells us that the Angels will come separate the wheat from the weeds. Jesus describes the weeds as everyone who causes sin *and* does evil. It is not two separate groups, but one. Those who lead others into sin do evil. They are ones who have rejected Jesus and purposely entice others away from God and into a lifestyle separate from God. They are people who actively reject Jesus and actively encourage others to reject Jesus. This is the work of the Devil.

What does Jesus say about those who lead others to sin in Matthew 18:6?



What does this passage say to you about the prospect of the world getting better and better?

According to Jesus' parable, what is the future for the righteous?

The righteous have no fear of the coming judgment. We know with certainty that our home will be with Jesus at the end of the age. He has promised us that he has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3). We will be able to rejoice with the Heavenly Host and we will see all those whom we have lead to righteousness in sowing good seed. I think we will be absolutely astounded at the amount of seed we have unknowingly sown. Thankfully it is our Lord who tends the fields! Daniel also spoke about the righteous at the end of the age. Look up Daniel 12:3 and write down his words.

## Words into Actions

### *Luke 8: 22-39*

This may seem like an odd time to transition out of Jesus' teachings, sermons and parables; and, turn to take a closer look at his healings. In Jesus' teachings he emphasized that one must *listen carefully* to his words, and *follow through* with one's actions (Luke 8:21). It is not just enough to hear the truth, we must respond to it with our actions. Chronologically speaking, these healings take place right after Jesus teaches the parables we just studied. They are a continuation of the truths taught in the parables. We will be leaving Matthew's Gospel and studying these healings in Luke's Gospel.

We have already established the fact that Jesus has both the authority and the power to do the work of God – to heal and forgive. We closely studied in Lesson 3 that the signs and miracles Jesus performed testified to that fact that Jesus' power and authority came from God. In Lesson 5 we talked about the fact that the Pharisees who refused to believe that Jesus' power comes from God, essentially committed blasphemy by attributing the work of God to Satan. The healings we will look at authenticate Jesus' teachings revealing his power over three aspects of the created world: the natural realm, the demonic realm, and over sickness and death. Each of these illustrations answers dramatically the question "*Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water and they obey him.*" (Luke 8:25) and deepens the faith of the disciples so they can go out and plant the seeds of the Gospel to increase the Kingdom.



If you haven't already done so, take a couple of minutes to ask the Lord to open your eyes to the truth he reveals about himself in this passage and to use it to strengthen your faith in who he is. Turn to Luke 8: 22-25. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

Why do you think Jesus wanted to go across the lake? (Think about his recent activities, and also read Luke 8:1) What do you think was his purpose in going to the other side of the lake?

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Why did the disciples wake Jesus up? What was it they were afraid of?

Why does Jesus ask them *“Where is your faith”*? What does it reveal about the disciples?

What does this event reveal about Jesus?

Jesus had been traveling from town to town with the disciples proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God. Jesus' plan was to cross the lake to the area of the Gerasenes<sup>1</sup>, and to continue proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He was doing exactly as he taught in the parable of the Four Soils, planting the seeds of the kingdom. The storm on the lake provides the disciples with the opportunity once again to experience first-hand the power and authority of Jesus. They should have had no fear of the storm while traveling across the lake with the Creator of the natural realm. Nothing will prevent Jesus from following through in his ministry. The disciples' fear revealed a weakness in their faith. Jesus commanding the storm to subside was an experience that would strengthen and shore up the disciples faith. They would remember and draw upon this experience with conviction in leading others to the kingdom of God even after Jesus' own ministry came to an end.

Before we move on to our next reading passage, I want to pause and reflect a moment on the beginning of verse 23. It says Jesus fell asleep. In fact he was so soundly asleep that the pitching and rocking of the boat in the midst of a squall didn't even wake him up. It just astounds me to think that our Jesus, the Son of God, while on earth was subject to some of the same human weaknesses we are, namely exhaustion. I know there are other passages that attest to Jesus fully taking on human form. There is just something about the fact that he was so exhausted from his ministering to the needs of so many lost and hurt souls, that he fell so soundly asleep. He worked and worked until he could no longer keep his eyes open because he felt so much empathy and compassion for his creation. His love had no bounds, but his body couldn't keep up without rest!



We'll continue on with Jesus across the lake where he is confronted by a demon-possessed man. Read Luke 8: 26-39 and answer the following questions.

Describe the appearance and dwelling place of the demon-possessed man.

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<sup>1</sup> The region of the Gerasenes was a Gentile region across the lake from Galilee. It was the area known as the Decapolis, or Ten Cities. It was inhabited primarily by Gentiles who would have had no objection to raising pigs.

How did the demons address Jesus? What did they fear Jesus would do and what does this tell you about the relationship between Jesus and the spirit-realm?



Why were the town's people afraid?

What did Jesus tell the man who had been possessed to do?

By doing as Jesus instructed what was the man doing?

The demons had deprived this man of any shred of natural human existence. He was living among the dead with not a single comfort for his body. The demoniac tells Jesus his name is Legion because there are many demons living in the man. A legion was the largest unit in the Roman army consisting of between 3,000 and 6,000 soldiers. From the description in verses 27-29, it appears that this man has been living under the influence of these demons for a very long time. Certainly all the people in the surrounding area would have known him and feared him greatly. Luke tells us that Jesus "cured" him. This word "cured" is the Greek word *sōzō* also means "saved"<sup>2</sup> in the context of salvation and eternal life. Jesus saved this man not only from the demons and a life less than human, but restored him to the love of God. This man's desire was to join Jesus, but Jesus had other plans for this man and his future would lead him to telling others about God's saving love.

When the herdsmen reported back to the town's people all that Jesus had said and done, the people's response was one of fear. So much fear that they insisted he depart immediately. This illustrates Jesus' parable in that the seeds of truth had fallen on infertile soil and would bear no fruit. The towns' people despite seeing and hearing the truth of the demoniac's healing, rejected Jesus. Hearing and seeing God's work may not be enough. Miracles may not be enough to bring faith. If one's heart isn't ready and willing to accept the truth of who Jesus is, then seeing God's power will only bring fear. That same miracle that instills holy awe and peace to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words*

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believer instills fear and dread in the non-believer. The miraculous healing of the demoniac led him into a life of peace from demons, and a commission from Jesus to spread the word of what God had done for him.

## Authority Over Sickness and Death

*Luke 8:40-56*

Today we will continue following Jesus as he travels from town to town proclaiming the kingdom of God and relating it back to his teaching. As we begin our scripture passage for today, pray that the Lord will open your eyes to further understanding his word so that you too will bear much fruit as you scatter the seeds of the kingdom of God.



Read Luke 8:40-56 and answer the following questions.

Who is Jairus, and why did he seek out Jesus?

What do the scriptures say about the crowd in verses 40, 42, and 45?

What did Jesus tell the woman had healed her (in verse 48)?

Look up Mark 5:28. Mark's account of this event reveals a detail not recounted by Luke. What were the woman's thoughts?

Upon hearing that his daughter was dead, what did Jesus tell Jairus?



Why do you think Jesus told Jairus and his wife not to tell anyone what had happened? Think about the mourner's response to Jesus in verse 53, and read Luke 8:10.

Our passage begins with Jairus, a synagogue ruler who is representative of the Jewish establishment. He is not identified as a Pharisee or Sadducee, but there is a link to the religious leadership of Israel. Interestingly, Jairus' belief in Jesus is attested to by the fact that he seeks out Jesus and falls at his feet pleading on his daughter's behalf.

As Jesus and the crowd proceed to the house of Jairus, there is an episode with a woman who has been hemorrhaging for twelve years. Upon her healing, she is fearful in presenting herself to Jesus. Luke doesn't explain why the woman was fearful. Perhaps she was afraid of being rebuked by Jesus for presuming to touch him, making him ceremonially unclean. Or perhaps, knowing that she was instantly healed, her fear stemmed from the appropriate response of awe in having just experienced the presence of God. Jesus assuages her fear with the endearment, *daughter*, and goes on to tell her that her faith has healed her, or more literally translated, it has *saved* her. It wasn't just touching Jesus that healed her, many people were pressing in and touching Jesus. The flow of his power going out to her was in response to her *faith*, and because of her faith it was not just physical healing but *spiritual* healing that she received.

We return back to the story of Jairus' daughter and the news that she is dead. Luke makes it very clear in his recounting that she is indeed dead. It is affirmed 3 times in this passage. Luke is making it very clear to us that Jesus is not healing a sick or comatose child, but a child that is dead. Jesus once again mitigates fear in telling Jairus not to be afraid and strengthens his faith in the promise that his daughter will be healed, or (again) *saved*. When they reach the home of Jairus, the house is surrounded by mourners who do not believe Jesus when he says the child is sleeping. They do not believe Jesus can restore her to life. Jairus on the other hand, accompanies Jesus, believing that Jesus can save her even though she is dead. Perhaps this is why Jesus tells Jairus and his wife not to tell anyone what had happened to their daughter. The fact that the mourners didn't believe Jesus could heal the child reveals that their hearts are not ready to receive the Gospel.

In both of these healings, the effect is immediate. The woman immediately stops bleeding, and the child immediately stands up. Jesus' healing is complete. It is not partial requiring convalescence. Both the woman and the girl are made completely whole and healthy again. Their miraculous experiences strengthen the faith that they (and the girl's) parents already possessed, and allows them to become a fruitful harvest for the kingdom of God. The unbelief of the Jewish mourners further demonstrates the refusal to accept Jesus as God's Son despite the abounding miracles and healings. Belief in Jesus identity is a choice, and rejection will reap the judgment of not being able to discern the truth in front of them, just as Jesus explained to his disciples, *"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him"* (Matt 13:11-12).

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I hope you found this week's homework as fascinating as I did! I'm just fascinated by how Jesus' teaching of the parables came to life through the miracles and healings that followed. Think back over what we studied this week and reflect on what the Lord has revealed to you. Write a prayer or journal entry about what you learned this week in the footsteps of the Lord. Use the space below, or a separate piece of paper.