

The Carpenter's Son

Matthew 13:47-58

There is no exact science to picking the limits of a sermon text, and my text this afternoon was chosen with a desire not to proceed either too slowly or too quickly through this great gospel of Matthew. In one sense there are three distinct paragraphs, three seemingly unrelated passages that conclude this chapter on parables. And I have chosen to preach on all three of them today. But they are not unrelated at all, for this gospel of Matthew is not a series of unrelated events in the life of Jesus, but rather a comprehensive and cohesive account of his life and history as the incarnate son of God, the second person of the Trinity living and dwelling on earth with the fullness of humanity.

The final conclusion of the chapter, however, is particularly noteworthy, his rejection. Matthew arranges a number of Jesus' parables together in this chapter, and we have looked at them in recent weeks. Parables were to reveal the truth of the gospel, and that is really where we left off last time,

v.34 "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, 35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."

But the parables were also used to conceal the truth, from those who would not believe. In speaking these parables, Jesus makes mention of Isaiah's call,

v.13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this

people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

So many would not hear. Many would not believe. And so Matthew records for us the reality that,

I. JESUS WAS REJECTED IN UNBELIEF.

And in his own hometown at that. The phrase has become almost proverbial in our day,

v.57 "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

So it was for Jesus, in Nazareth. After speaking all these parables that we have studied, after all the clear and unmistakable expressions of spiritual truth in the common and ordinary experiences of life, still there was unbelief. It is appropriate to ask "why?" Why such unbelief? What was the stumbling block? These verses give us some answers. First, I believe, the unbelief in Nazareth came from,

A. A failure to recognize spiritual power.

They simply refused to admit the existence of anything supernatural. They refused to admit that the power of God was fundamentally different, and superior, to the power of man. And so when they saw Jesus, all that they saw was a man.

v.55-56

They knew Mary, Jesus' mother. They knew his brothers and sisters: James, Joses, Simon and Judas are mentioned by name. That certainly makes the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity look foolish, but more than that, it is mentioned here to emphasize the ordinary, human existence of Jesus.

Jesus had brothers, at least four of them. And he had more than one sister. He was “the carpenter’s son.” An ordinary, normal human being. Now, of course, that is true. He was an ordinary, normal human being. He was fully human, as fully human as you and I. He belonged to a human family, with brothers and sisters. But he was also God, and that’s what the people of Nazareth failed to see. They failed to see his deity, his divine nature. And not because of an absence of evidence, but despite the abundance of that evidence. They would not believe. They would not admit the existence of supernatural power. They would not believe.

People continue to live in that state of unbelief, don’t they? The starting point for so many people, the foundation upon which they stand and upon which their worldview is built, is the simple proposition that supernatural power doesn’t exist. That’s why unbelieving scientists continue to believe and propagate the idea of evolution. They really don’t know how the world was created. They don’t have a clue about the origin of the world, but they start their whole thought process with a very determined commitment that the supernatural doesn’t exist. God doesn’t exist. They can’t explain how they know that, they simply begin there and doggedly refuse to alter that most basic presupposition.

The people of Nazareth are doing the same thing. “Is this not the carpenter’s son?” Is this not just an ordinary human being? So we read in verse 54 that they were “astonished.” They were amazed, in an unbelieving sort of way. They were struck with terror, trembling even with fear. They marveled at Jesus, but not at the greatness of his power, but at their own inability to accept and believe it. After all, again, this was simply the carpenter’s son! It was, therefore,

B. A failure of spiritual pride.

That is what keeps so many people from believing in Jesus. Pride. An unwillingness to acknowledge the superior power of God, and the superior authority of God that goes along with it. And the word used in verse 57 is even stronger. “They were offended at him.”

They were scandalized, which is the actual Greek word used. He was a stumbling block. They were indignant in their offense. They would not believe because they would not believe. They chose not to believe. Instead, in their own spiritual pride, they were offended at the very demonstration of his power. As it still is today!

1 Cor. 1:22 “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,.”

A stumbling block to those who remained hardened in their pride.

1 Peter 2:4 “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.””

And where is that in Scripture, as Peter quotes it? It was a warning given to the Old Testament people of God from the mouth of the prophet Isaiah.

Is. 8:13 “The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him

be your fear, And let Him be your dread. 14 He will be as a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense To both the houses of Israel, As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many among them shall stumble; They shall fall and be broken, Be snared and taken.”

Thus Paul concludes his condemnation of unbelieving Israel of his day with these words,

Rom. 9:30 “What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

Jesus remains that rock of offense. He remains the stumbling block to anyone who, in their spiritual pride, will refuse to recognize his honor and his authority. And so we preach that stumbling block! We preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Paul would even say,

1 Cor. 2:2 “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

We don’t try to remove the offense, or make light of it. Rather, we proclaim it boldly, because only then will people today be confronted with,

C. The failure of unbelief.

The Jews of Nazareth took offense at Jesus because they saw his power, and they stubbornly refused to believe.

v.57-58

Jesus brings that judgment himself upon his own hometown. He left. He did not do many more miracles. He would not cast the pearls of the gospel before swine. He spoke in parables, so that those who would honor him might understand the revelation of God; and so that those who would stumble over him as the rock of offense might be hardened in their sin, “lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart.”

Thus the parable of the net, fitting so clearly into this context of,

II. KINGDOM JUDGMENT.

I could have included this last parable in my sermon last week, but it seems to fit better here as a conclusion. What is the kingdom of God like?

v.47-50

I don’t know how many of you have ever seen a fishing net. Every one of Jesus’ listeners would have; they would have been able to immediately visualize a huge net as was used by the local fishermen. The image would have been clear and plain. All the fish would have been trapped in the net, both those that were good and those that were bad.

So just imagine for a moment the scene. It would have smelled awful. And if you aren’t used to fishing, you would like be grossed out the sliminess of the whole matter. Men sitting down and sorting fish. Some worth keeping. Others not. Some worth selling and eating. Others worth absolutely nothing. Matthew tells us they were simply thrown away.

And the point is? Certainty. Absolute certainty. The kingdom of heaven is like that dragnet, in that the end of the age will come.

We will all be swept up in that fishnet, because of,

A. The certainty of the end of the age.

Remember the parable of the weeds and the wheat field?

v.39 "...the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels."

The point is that the end of the age will come. A final conclusion. A judgment.

Heb. 9:27 "...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

2 Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

The end of the age will come. Again, the parable of the weeds,

v.40 "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Many people refuse to acknowledge that reality. They live only in the present, with no thought of judgment. No thought of accountability. No thought of responsibility. No thought of the need for redemption.

Just life here and now. For some that means, eat, drink and be merry. For some, that is hopelessly depressing, or overwhelmingly stressful because of the circumstances of life. For some, it is just an intentional ignorance or a careless regard

for anything to do with eternity. It is the cry of our age, and it is the temptation that we face even as Christians. We get so wrapped up in today, so wrapped up in the busyness, the pleasures, the struggles, the demands of today, that we fail to think about the certainty of the end of the age.

Beloved, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." That is what the kingdom of heaven is like. As a fisherman gathers in his net, "so it will be at the end of the age." Verse 49. Think about that for a few moments this afternoon. Think about "the end of the age." That is the focus that puts the present into its proper perspective. Life is not simply about today. Life is not simply about the experiences of this age, living in these mortal bodies on this earth. Life has an eternal perspective.

So what is it that you struggle with today? Think of those things in the context of eternity, that your struggles might not appear so ultimately. What is it about this world that attracts you, tempting you to love the world and the things of the world? What are your besetting sins, the idols of your heart? Think about those things, as well, in the context of the certainty of the end of the age.

What are your goals in life? And how many of them have eternal consequences? What about your work, your labor? Is it for the Lord? Is it all performed with the motive of seeking his glory? And how is your soul? We go to doctors and take medicine in order to care for our earthly bodies. But how is your soul? Have you nourished your soul? Are you preparing your soul for the eternal glory that will come at the end of the age?

And are you burdened for the souls of those who are yet destined for eternal judgment, because of their unbelief?

This is what the kingdom of heaven is like, it “is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind...So it will be at the end of the age.” If you really believe that, really understand that, your problems and struggles won’t seem so large. Your love and attraction to the world won’t seem nearly so powerful. Your idols won’t seem so appealing.

And your priorities will change, for if you focus on the certainty of the end of the age, you will focus on the well-being of your heart and soul in the presence of God. And worship becomes more important as well, doesn’t it? For here we gather to gain a foretaste of that eternal glory.

Notice the distinctive characteristic of the end of the age.

B. Separation at the end of the age.

v.49

Separation unto judgment.

v.50

The evil will be separated out from among the just, or the righteous. And only they shall live. Only the righteous shall escape the condemnation of the second death. Only those who have trusted in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Only those who believe in the Son of God. Only those who have Jesus, who believe in Jesus, who have faith in Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for their sin. Only those whose lives have been changed and transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus. Only the just, the righteous.

Be sure, that does not mean the “self-righteous,” those who think themselves to be good in themselves and by their own work and merit. It is those righteous, by faith, who shall live by that

faith. And they will receive the gift of eternal life. Not so the wicked.

v.49-50

The image is not pretty, and it is certainly not comfortable. A fiery furnace. Weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is not a new idea for Jesus.

Mat. 8:11 “I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, 12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

And we shall see this eternal separation again.

Mat. 25:30 “And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

With even more detail,

Mat. 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ 44 “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a

stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45 Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Let me read a few more descriptions of this eternal fire from the book of Revelation.

Rev. 20:7 “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Rev. 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

And, Rev. 21:5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words

are true and faithful.”

6 And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. 8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Beloved, there will be an eternal separation at the end of the age! So what is the application for us? The same as it was for Jesus’ disciples. So let me ask you the same question he asked them.

v.51

Have you understood the gospel? Do you believe the gospel? Do you believe there will be an eternal separation, eternal life for those who believe in Jesus and death for those who don’t? More personally, do you rest in the hope for yourself? The gospel promises you, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Rom. 10:8 “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame...13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

That’s the new treasure of,

v.52

The new gospel of Jesus, that's the treasure.

1 John 5:11 "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

But there is treasure in the old, in the revelation of God in the Old Testament that came before Jesus. The old treasure points to Jesus as well!

III. THE NEW AND THE OLD.

So the treasure is the word of God, the Bible. You and I are to be the masters of a house, and the treasures of that house is the written revelation of God. The old and the new alike both point us to Jesus. And he alone is the way, the truth and the life. We know that from,

A. The old treasure of Old Testament prophets.

v.52

The contrast, of course, is with,

B. The new treasure of incarnate glory.

v.52 "...the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

We have the benefit of both, the old and the new. Old treasures of God's revelation that came before Jesus, and the new treasures that came with him. So don't be like those in his own hometown who rejected him. Don't be among those who are separated out at the end of the age and thrown into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all these things?" Do you believe in

Jesus? If you do, then you will gain an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Acts 4:12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."