



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Parables."
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Enduring." Text: *Matthew 13.31-52; Psalm 78.1-8.*

☐ **Day #1—Monday, July 27th. Read: Matthew 13.31-32. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

This week we will explore what have been referred to as, "The Parables of the Kingdom." Remember, the Kingdom of Heaven (or God) is where God's will is done through Jesus. I have suggested that the embodiment of the Kingdom is Jesus Himself. In and through Jesus, we see and receive God's will, purpose, and plan for our lives. God's Kingdom has arrived *particularly* in Jesus' ministry.

Below is an outline of the kingdom parables in *Matthew 13*. Notice the contrast between the common assumptions about the kingdom during the time of Jesus, and the kingdom reality that Jesus describes...

<u>The Parable</u>	<u>Common 1st Century Kingdom Expectations</u>	<u>Unexpected Realities</u>
The sower 13.3–9, 18–23	Messiah rules all nations.	<i>Individuals</i> respond to God's invitation.
Wheat/tares 13.24–30, 37–43	Believers <i>rule</i> the world with Messiah.	Believers live <i>among</i> people of the world.
Mustard seed 13.31–32	Kingdom begins in majestic <i>glory</i> .	Kingdom begins in <i>insignificance</i> .
Leaven 13.33	The kingdom <i>includes</i> only the righteous.	Believers <i>become</i> increasingly righteous.
Hidden treasure 13.44	The kingdom is <i>public</i> , for all.	The kingdom is <i>hidden</i> and for individual "purchase."
Priceless pearl 13.45–46	Kingdom <i>brings</i> valued things.	The kingdom requires <i>abandoning</i> earthly values.
Dragnet 13.47–50	Kingdom <i>begins</i> with separation of unrighteous.	Kingdom <i>ends</i> with separation of the unrighteous. ¹

Reflect and Pray: What do you notice about the Kingdom of God in these parables? What surprises you the most about these contrasts? Today, pray about the Kingdom of Heaven in your life. Does God *reign* in all parts of your life?

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, July 28th. Read: Again: Matthew 13.31-32. —Examine: The Text and its Message.**

The "mustard seed" was the smallest of the garden seeds used by first century Jewish farmers. The mustard seed was often referred to in the Jewish Mishnah as an illustration of something quite small (For example, Jesus used the mustard seed in this way as well: "faith as small as a mustard seed," *Matthew 17.20*). Though its seed is so small, a mustard plant can grow to a great height (12-15 feet!) in one season, and would be a nesting place for the birds. Like the mustard seed, the kingdom begins very small, but will grow to become a resting place for the all other kingdoms of the world if they *submit* to the reign of the true King—God!

¹ Adapted from, www.logos.com

Most commentators believe that the image of the tree here is an allusion to the Old Testament. There are several passages where powerful earthly kingdoms are pictured as trees with birds in the branches. In *Ezekiel 17.22-23*, God speaks of His plans...

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches.”

It is possible that Jesus’ parable is referring to this passage and is describing the day when God’s Kingdom, inaugurated by Jesus through His ministry, will be such a powerful Kingdom, it will offer shelter and rest to all the nations of the world. The image of the Kingdom beginning small and becoming great, so that all of the nations come to find peace in God’s Kingdom, is...

...no doubt...to express the *amplitude* of the tree. But as this seed has a hot, fiery vigor, gives out its best virtues when bruised, and is grateful to the taste of birds, which are accordingly attracted to its branches both for shelter and food, is it straining the parable, asks Trench, to suppose that, besides the wonderful *growth* of His kingdom, our Lord selected this seed to illustrate further the *shelter, repose* and *blessedness* it is destined to afford to the nations of the world?²

Consider/Reflect: Where do you need *rest* in your life? If the Kingdom is here in Jesus (and it is!), you can find *rest in Him* (*Matthew 11.28-30*).

□ Day #3—Wednesday, July 29th. Read: Matthew 13.33. —Explore: The background to this text(s).

In the next parable, Jesus describes the Kingdom of Heaven as leaven (yeast). Jesus used leaven to illustrate the pervasive growth of the Kingdom of God. The “leaven” or yeast, functioned in a manner similar to yeast used today; it causes dough to rise. Like the mustard seed, leaven is very small compared to its result—a whole loaf, or loaves, of bread. This parable reveals the Kingdom’s hidden power to pervade and reshape the world. Like yeast, the Kingdom, though hidden to the eye, works its way through the whole world (the lump of dough) powerfully and completely.

It is very interesting that in most Biblical passages, yeast or leaven, is used to illustrate the *invasive influence of evil and/or corruption*. For example, Jesus warned about the corrupt doctrines (“leaven”) of the Pharisees (*Matthew 16.11-12*). However, it appears here that Jesus reverses the imagery; just as “bad” yeast can spread corruption, so can “good” yeast spread blessings. Either way we can see the nature of both the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world (the devil): it is an element, influence, or agent that works subtly but surely to enlighten or enliven (Jesus and the Kingdom) or deceive and destroy (the devil/hell).

Another thought about this parable. The mustard seed and the yeast teaches the same general truth: the small beginnings of the Kingdom contrasted with the Kingdom’s powerful results. Likewise, perhaps another way we can interpret the mustard seed and yeast in this parable would be that the yeast describes the *inward* growth of the Kingdom, while the mustard seed parable describes the *outward* growth. Commenting on the parable of the yeast (or leaven) as being about inward growth, Matthew Henry compares the leaven with the Word of God:

The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there, it ferments; *the word is quick and powerful*, Heb. 4:12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. What a sudden change did Elijah’s mantle make upon Elisha! 1 Ki. 19:20. It works silently and insensibly (Mk. 4:26), yet strongly and irresistibly: it does its work without noise, for so is *the way of the Spirit*, but does it without fail. Hide but the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish to it, and yet none sees how it is done, but by degrees *the whole is leavened*.³

Again, both the mustard seed and the yeast are parables of small beginnings. While we may believe that God cannot use us or what we have to offer, God delights in using the weak, the seemingly insignificant, and the powerless to reveal His power and strength! Never underestimate our God! Little becomes great when God is at work!

Consider/Reflect: Where (in your life or in our church) have you seen faith like “yeast” or a “mustard seed” have great impact?

² *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, On the Old and New Testaments.*

³ Matthew Henry. *Commentary on the Whole Bible.*

□ **Day #4--Thursday, July 30th. Read: Matthew 13.44-46.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In the next set of parables, Jesus describes the *value* of the Kingdom in terms of the values of the world...treasure and pearls...and how opposition to the Kingdom will be judged (13.47–50). Jesus describes the Kingdom as *so valuable*, it is worth *all* that the seeker owns!

Recall, a *parable* is a short story rooted in the common experiences/things/people during the days of Jesus. What Jesus is describing in the parable was very common. Before the days of banks and secure deposit boxes, what treasures a person had would often be hidden in secret closets in the house, or in storage vaults under the house. Sometimes they were buried in a field in a spot unknown to all except the owner. However, sometimes the owner went away and died before the time of his intended return and the treasure was left. Similarly, during times of war, great numbers of men would be carried off to fight or taken as slaves. Consequently, they would leave their valuables concealed in places no one knew about. All of this is to say that what Jesus describes here did occur.

A farmer, or in this parable, perhaps a tenant farmer or laborer doing their work, would uncover valuables left by others. However, the law stated that what was found in a field belonged to the owner of the land where the treasures were found. Therefore, if the treasure was desired, the field would need to be bought. The Kingdom of Heaven is such a treasure; will we surrender whatever keeps us from “owning” this heavenly treasure?

In the parable of the pearl, we hear again about the valuable nature of the Kingdom. The parables of the treasure and of the pearl belong closely together as they illustrate the whole-hearted response, which the Kingdom of Heaven requires; no sacrifice is too great, and no other concern must stand in the way of it. Importantly, the focus is not a negative “giving up” but the joy and fulfillment that come from having what we have always wanted! There is something about the Kingdom of Heaven (Jesus) which makes whole-hearted action the only proper response!

Consider/Reflect: What do you consider a “treasure” in your life? How do your earthly treasures relate to the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven? What do you need to surrender in order to receive the joy that God has for you?

□ **Day #5— Friday, July 31st. Read: Matthew 13.47-52.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

The parable of the fishing net, like that of the wheat and weeds, reveals the eventual judgment and reward that will take place at the end of human history. Jesus used the well-known activity of fishing to show that God would separate the worthy and unworthy on the day of judgment (*Matthew 25.31-46*).

The word here rendered “net” signifies a large “drag-net.” This type of net, a “*seine*-net,” was either dragged between two boats or was laid out by a sine boat and drawn toward land with long ropes. This large net had weights attached to the lower edge and floats on the top, enabling it to hang vertically in the water (this net is different from the “casting-net” of *Mark 1.16, 18*). Essentially, this net would capture all kinds of fish as well as other elements in the lake/sea. This would then necessitate the fisherman pulling the net up to the shore and separating the edible and kosher fish from the inedible ones, as well as any debris.

Jesus is illustrating the universal reach of the Gospel; Just as God does not discriminate and has called ALL people to receive His forgiveness and reconciliation (the net); some will reject that forgiveness and reconciliation and will consequently be separated from those who submitted to Jesus’ Lordship in their lives.

Verses 51–52 reveal what a disciple of the Kingdom is called to do. The disciple must be perceptive and listen to God’s Word; to understand what Jesus has accomplished for His people. Part of this understanding is to relate the old to the new, that is, the work of Jesus to the revelation already given in the Old Testament. Both are “treasures” given to us by God to reveal to us His character, will, and ways so that we may honor and serve our Lord and fulfill His purpose through our lives.

Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth (13.53–58) by his relatives and neighbors was a clear example of those who were “offended” by the claims Jesus was making and ultimately *reject* Jesus (*Matthew 11.6*). They were unable to accept Jesus’ offer of the new treasures along with the old. Note the link of 13.55–56 with 12.50. Those who had been closest to Jesus when He was a child rejected him. It was not the familial connections that proved one’s relationship to Jesus; it was *obedience* to the will of His Father; it is to surrender all that one has in order to receive the treasure that is the Kingdom of Heaven!

Consider/Reflect: Today, pray for the lost, those who need to be “caught” in the Gospel net. Do you know someone who needs Jesus? Pray specifically for them.

□ **Day #6-Saturday, August 1st. Read: Psalm 78.1-8.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on Psalm 76.1-8 and:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.⁴

Consider/Reflect: “God’s dealings with Israel of old point to His acts toward us today. Israel’s history teaches us to see and to repent of our own lack of faith. Also, God’s saving deeds in Israel’s history, especially in His acts toward and through David, point us to what Christ has done so that we may have God’s ongoing forgiveness and salvation. [Pray]: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has. . . raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David” (Lk 1:68–69). Amen.”⁵

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...

Sermon Series: “Jesus, Who?”

Scripture Texts:

Isaiah 55.1-5

Romans 9.1-5, (6-13)

Matthew 14.13-21

⁴ Martin Luther. “Luther’s Small Catechism.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).
⁵ *The Lutheran Study Bible*.