

2.8.26 Blessed “Stories” Matt 13:10-17”

Focus Text

“Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

(Matthew 13:10–17, ESV)

1. The Given Secrets

“Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

(Matthew 13:10–11, ESV)

Jesus reveals that the purpose of the parables was to reveal the secrets of the Kingdom of God to His closest disciples and those in the crowd who only sought His miracles or to criticize Him would not understand the parables. The disciples see Jesus as the Messiah, Savior, and have given up on everything to follow Him. Jesus’ first priority is teaching them the secrets of the kingdom. As we discussed last week, the conclusion in chapter 12 was that the wicked generation could not see who Jesus was. The disciples have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, and they are following Him everywhere He goes. It’s important to note that these disciples at this time are more than just the 12 we are familiar with, and anyone would be welcome to follow Jesus and learn from Him. Yet the vast majority are concerned with what Jesus can do for them, or they are worried Jesus will steal political power from them, and thus the parables won’t reveal more of who Jesus is.

“These contrasting states are presumably assumed from the disciples’ attachment to Jesus (cf. 12:49–50) and the crowds’ failure to move beyond curiosity, being impressed and wanting to benefit from Jesus’ ministry;³⁵ they have not repented (cf. 11:20–24).

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In 12:38, their call for a sign reveals their failure to perceive what is before the eyes of all in the ministry of Jesus.

35 The characterisation of ‘this generation’ in Mt. 11:16–19 hardly yet fits the crowds as they have appeared in Matthew’s story. However, the failure of the people of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida is highlighted in vv. 20–24 and may well be considered pertinent to the crowds gathered by the nearby lakeside in chap. 13 (on this basis, Matthew can likely take the orientation of the scribes and Pharisees in 12:38 to characterise ‘[this] [evil] generation’, as mentioned in vv. 39, 41, 42, 45).¹

2. Receiving from the Master

“For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” **(Matthew 13:12–13, ESV)**

Jesus then unveils that those who seek after Jesus and His mission will receive more. But to those that aren’t interested in knowing God, they will lose even more knowledge. Back in chapter 7, Jesus declared that those who ask, seek, and knock will find Jesus and His message. Jesus is reiterating this truth to the disciples. Recently, I saw a Planet Fitness post in Troy, Ohio. The post asked that people not leave information about Jesus in the locker rooms. One comment simply said, “Just do what I do, take the information, and throw it away in the trash can.” This person is showing us the point of this warning from Jesus. The parables for those who desire to seek after God and His plan will find the heavenly information they desire. Those who don’t care or are apathetic will find the parables forgettable trash can fodder. If Jesus’ message of salvation is the most valuable gift God wants to give to humanity, then it would make sense that Jesus teaches in a way where those who receive it appreciate it deeply, and it’s not wasted on those who will throw it away.

““Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” **(Matthew 7:7–8, ESV)**

“But there is implied the inference that the object was to present the “secrets” of the kingdom in a form which would enable all such as had (v. 12) capacity

¹ Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

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to understand, to penetrate their meaning, whilst it would shroud these divine secrets from those who had no qualifications for appreciating them. In this way Christ fulfilled His own saying, “Give not that which is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine.”²

3. Seeing what the Prophets Foretold

“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” **(Matthew 13:14–17, ESV)**

Finally, Jesus leans into the call of Isaiah found in Isaiah chapter 6. God called Isaiah to go and tell Israel to repent and turn away from their sins. Jesus’ mission is calling people to repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand. Isaiah was warned about the wicked state of Israel and that Isaiah was called to tell them to turn away from their wicked ways. Yet, in doing so Isaiah knew that they would hear and yet ignore, they would see, and still ignore, and that it was going to be a difficult calling because many would reject God’s calling through the prophet Isaiah. Jesus has revealed in chapter 12 that he is greater than kings and prophets. He has done miraculous acts throughout the region, and yet they are not bringing people to repentance. Jesus knows that at this moment, He is being called like Isaiah to a difficult task.

Then Jesus reframes the negative to a positive, which is that the disciples who are following Him are receiving a gift that prophets and godly people have desired to see in their lifetimes. Jesus is bringing the world a gift, and the parables will either help the curious find life, and the apathetic will forget about them.

“And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “ ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”” **(Isaiah 6:9–10, ESV)**

² Allen, Willoughby C. 1907. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew. International Critical Commentary. New York: C. Scribner’s Sons.

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“The idea that prophets and righteous people of the past longed to see and hear what is now taking place is of a piece with the emphasis on fulfilment of prophecy in Matthew, which implies a forward-looking quality to OT faith.⁵²”³

Application

This will be a week of preparation for the parables in chapter 13. Spend DAILY time in prayer that the parables Jesus teaches will unlock more of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven for you. Have a conversation with your cornerman about chapter 13 and if there are any parables you are hoping God will unlock for you. Amen.

³ 52 Pss. Sol. 17:46; 18:7 contain beatitudes using the language of sight and expressed in favour of those who will live in the days when God acts for his people. The future orientation of OT faith is asserted in Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 1:10.

Nolland, John. 2005. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.