

Matthew 13 Commentary-C H Spurgeon

[PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT](#)

MATTHEW 13:1-53 OUR KING SETS FORTH SEVEN PARABLES OF HIS KINGDOM

Matthew 13:1. THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

He was not afraid of being seized by his family, but freely went abroad.

How serene was his behavior. He “sat by the sea side”: this must have been a great relief to him. He ceased from the controversy of the house and the street, and came into restful communion with nature. On the beach, in the open air, he gave greater play to his imagination, and quitted the didactic style for the parabolical.

Matthew 13:2. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

Great multitudes longed to hear his teaching, and see his miracles. These pressed upon him so eagerly that there was danger of his being pushed into the sea; and the more so because it was not a scattered crowd, but they were gathered together unto him — pressing about his person. The ship became his pulpit, and the little space between it and the shore gave him breathing-space, and enabled the more to hear him. The shelving beach and the blue sky would make a grand auditorium, with room for “the whole multitude”; a finely comprehensive expression. The teacher sat, and the people stood: we should have less sleeping in congregations if this arrangement still prevailed.

Matthew 13:3. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.

He had much instruction to give, and he chose to convey it in parables.

What wonderful pictures they were! for us, as well as for those who heard them! This parable of the sower is a mine of teaching concerning the kingdom; for the seed was “the word of the kingdom.” (See verse 19.) “Behold!”: every word is worthy of attention. May be, the preacher pointed to a farmer on the shore, who was beginning to sow one of the terraces. “A sower”, read “The Sower.” Jesus, our Lord, has taken up this business of the Sower at his Father’s bidding. The sower “went forth.” See him leaving the Father’s house, with this one design upon his heart — “to sow.”

Matthew 13:4. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side and the fowls came and devoured them up.

When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside: even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know he sows the best of seed, and in the best manner; but some of it falls on the trodden path, and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the soil. That soil was hard, and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul, and birds to pilfer: it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the fowls came and devoured them up. If truth does not enter the heart, evil influences soon remove it.

Matthew 13:5, 6. Some fell upon stony place, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Among the rocks, or on the shallow soil, with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell; for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these stony places the seed speedily sprang up because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down.

When the time came for the sun to put forth his force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. "They had no deepness of earth, " and "no root "; what could they do but wither quite away ? Everything was hurried with them; the seeds had no time to root themselves, and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

Matthew 13:7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.

The ground was originally a thornbrake, and had been cleared by the thorns being cut down; but speedily the old roots sent out new shoots, and other weeds came up with them; and the tangled beds of thistles, thorns, nettles, and what not, strangled the feeble up-shootings of the wheat. The native plants choked the poor stranger. They would not permit the intrusive corn to share the field with them: evil claims a monopoly of our nature.

Thus we have seen three sots of seed come to an untimely end.

Matthew 13:8. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather, and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone; yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure: "other fell into good ground ."

The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil: it varied from an hundredfold to thirtyfold. All good ground is not alike good; and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season, and under same farmer; and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest.

Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundred fold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirtyfold.

Matthew 13:9. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

It reminds one of the officer saying to his men, "Attention! "HE speaks, who, as Lord of all, has a right to be heard. Ears are for hearing: use them most when HE speaks who made the ear.

Matthew 13:10. And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

Perhaps the crowd had complained to the disciples that they could not see what their Master was driving at The apostles may have felt unable to reply. As the matter perplexed them, they did well to inquire of their infallible Teacher, rather than to invent an explanatory theory, which might have been altogether a mistake.

Matthew 13:11. He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but to them it is not given.

The usual reasons for the use of parable would be to make truth clear, to arrest attention, and to impress teaching upon the memory. But in this instance our Lord was, by his parabolic speech, fulfilling the judicial sentence which had been long before pronounced upon the apostate nation among whom he received such unworthy treatment. They were doomed to have the light and to remain willfully in the dark. To his own disciples our Lord would explain the parable, but not to the outside unbelieving throng.

If any one among the multitude became sincerely anxious to know the Lord's meaning, he would become his disciple, and then he would be taught "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"; but those who rejected the Messiah would, while listening to parables, hear and not hear, see and not perceive.

To hear the outward word is a common privilege: "To know the mysteries " is a gift of sovereign grace. Our Lord speaks the truth with much boldness: "It is given unto you ", "but to them it is not given. " Solemn words.

Humbling truths. Salvation, and the knowledge by which it comes, are given as the Lord wills. There is such a thing as distinguishing grace after all; let the moderns revile the doctrine as they may.

Matthew 13:12. For whoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Those who had some understanding of spiritual truth would come to yet clearer light; but those who lived willfully in the dark, would, in the presence of light, become more and more bewildered, and would gain nothing but the discovery that they did not know what they thought they knew. An ignorant man going into a museum, or hearing a learned lecture, only feels himself a greater fool. He learns nothing, because he is not able to comprehend the elementary terms of the science. It is just so with carnal men; spiritual truth rather blinds them than enlightens them.

Matthew 13:13. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, nether do they understand.

This was his reason for speaking to them in parables; they could not understand spiritual things, and therefore he gave them no naked doctrine, for then they would not have listened at all. They did not really see what they saw, nor hear what they heard. The plainer the teaching, the more they were puzzled by it. They had become so morally and spiritually diseased. that the only thing they would notice was the attractive dress of a truth: for the truth itself they had no liking and no perception. To this day, marvels of creation, works of grace, deeds of providence, and ordinances of religion, are all as voiceless music, or painted suns, to carnal men: they hear not their teaching, they feel not their power.

Matthew 13:14. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.

That wonderful sixth chapter of Isaiah is constantly being quoted in the New Testament. How clearly it sets forth the doom of guilty Israel! Those who refuse to see are punished by becoming unable to see. The penalty of sin is to be left in sin. The Jews of our Lord's day would trifle with what they heard, and so they were left to hear without understanding. Even the Messenger of the Covenant would speak in vain to them.

Matthew 13:15. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

They had deadened their own faculties. Perversity in sin had made them heartless, and deaf, and blind to all spiritual things. Thus, they blocked up the way of salvation against themselves, and used their utmost diligence to prevent their own conversion. It was but just that the truth should reach them in a manner which would condemn rather than convert. If it had come in any other form but the parabolic, they would not even have deigned to listen to it. In that form truth would have been more clearly seen than in any other if they had been willing to see it; but, as they were unwilling, the emblem became a dark lantern shutting the light from them. If men will willfully close their eyes, the very light shall blind them. Thus, when the Lord passes any by, it is due to their sin; but when he chooses any, it is not because they are better, but that he may make them better.

This passage teaches that the possession of faculties is a small thing unless we fitly use them. Men should "see with their eyes, hear

with their ears, and understand with their hearts. ” If they turn to Christ he will heal them, even of gross hearts, and dull ears, and closed eyes. But, alas! there is a generation which will not be converted; for they are proud of their blindness and grossness.

Matthew 13:16, 17. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen, them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Happy men to be chosen to such a privilege! Grace has opened your eyes and ears. Blessed are your eyes, for they see. What wonders, treasures, revelations do they see! Eyes are blessed which gaze upon the mysteries of divine love. Blessed are your ears, for they hear; hear something sweeter than the song of angels, even the voice of everlasting love from the heart of Jesus. You have learned the great secret; the counsel of the Lord has been revealed to you, and you are blessed. You under the gospel are made to know what the greatest and best of men under the law could not discover.

The shortest day of summer is longer than the longest day in winter; and you, ye humble ones, under the gospel dispensation see more of truth in Jesus than the best of saints could see before he came. There is no doubt about this, for Jesus sets the seal of — “Verily I say unto you ” upon the statement Favored above all others are those whose regenerated faculties both see and hear the truth of God. Are we among this blessed number? If so, let us praise the Lord for so great a boon. Truly to hear the gospel and to see its blessings is a high favor. The love and gratitude which we show in return should be great indeed!

Matthew 13:18. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

Because you see behind the curtain, and have grace given to discern the inner meaning through the outer metaphor, come and hear the explanation of the parable of the sower.

Matthew 13:19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.

The gospel is “the word of the kingdom ”: it has royal authority in it; it proclaims and reveals King Jesus, and it leads men to obedience to his sway. To hear but not to understand, is to leave the good seed on the outside of your nature, and not to take it into yourself. Nothing can come of such hearing to anyone.

Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word: “Then cometh the wicked one ”, even at the moment when the seed fell. He is always afraid to leave the truth even in hard and dry contact with a mind, and so he catcheth it away at once, and it is forgotten, or even disbelieved. It is gone, at any rate; and we have not in our hearer’s mind a corn-field, but a highway, hard, and much frequented. The man was not an opposer, he “received seed ”; but he received the truth as he was, without the soil of his nature being changed; and the seed remained as it was, till the foul bird of hell took it off the place, and there was an end of it. So far as the truth was sown in his heart, it was in his natural, unrenewed heart, and therefore it took no living hold. How many such hearers we have! To these we preach in vain; for what they learn they unlearn, and what they receive they reject almost as soon as it comes to them.

Lord, suffer none of us to be impervious to thy royal word; but whenever the smallest seed of truth falls on us, may we open our soul to it!

Matthew 13:20, 21. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by He is offended.

Here the seed was the same and the sower the same, but the result somewhat different. In this case there was earth enough to cover the seed, and heat enough to make it grow quickly. The convert was attentive, and easily persuaded; he seemed glad to accept the gospel at once, he was even eager and enthusiastic, joyful and demonstrative. He heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Surely this looked very promising! But the soil was essentially evil, hard, barren, superficial. The man had no

living entrance into the mystery of the gospel, no root in himself, no principle, no hold of the truth with a renewed heart; and so he flourished hurriedly and showily for a season, and only for a season. It is tersely put, "He dureth for a while. " That "while " may be longer or shorter according to circumstances. When matters grow hot with Christians, either through affliction from the Lord, or persecution from the world, the temporary believer is so sapless, so rootless, so deficient in moisture of grace, that he dries up, and his profession withers. Thus, again, the sower's hopes are disappointed, and his labor is lost. Till stony hearts are changed it must always be so. We meet with many who are soon hot and as soon cold.

They receive the gospel "anon, " and leave it "by-and-by. " Everything is on the surface, and therefore is hasty and unreal. May we all have broken hearts and prepared minds, that when truth comes to us it may take root in us and abide.

Matthew 13:22. He also that received seed among the thorn is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

This class of hearers we know by personal acquaintance in this busy age.

They hear the word, they are affected by the gospel, they take it as seed into their minds, and it grows well for a season; but the heart cannot belong to two absorbing objects at the same time, and therefore these men cannot long yield themselves up to the world and Christ too. Care to get money, covetousness, trickery, and sins which come from hasting to be rich, or else pride, luxury, oppression, and other sins which come of having obtained wealth, prevent the man from being useful in religious matters, or even sincere to himself: "and becometh unfruitful. " He keeps his profession; he occupies his place; but his religion does not grow; in fact, it shows sad signs of being choked and checked by worldliness. The leaf of outward religiousness is there, but there is no dew on it; the ear of promised fruit is there, but there are no kernels in it. The weeds have outgrown the wheat, and smothered it. We cannot grow thorn and corn at the same time: the attempt is fatal to a harvest for Jesus.

See how wealth is here associated with care, deceitfulness, and unfruitfulness. It is a thing to be handled with care. Why are men so eager to make their thorn-brake more dense with briars?

Would not a good husbandman root out the thorns and brambles? Should we not, as much as possible, keep free from the care to get, to preserve, to increase, and to hoard worldly riches? Our heavenly Father will see that we have enough; why do we fret about earthly things? We cannot give our minds to these things and to the kingdom also.

Matthew 13:23. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Here is the story of the Word's success. This fourth piece of land will repay all charges. Of course, no one parable teaches all truth, and therefore we have no mention here of the ploughing which always precedes a fruitful harvest. No heart of man is good by nature: the good Lord had made this plot into "good ground. " In this case, both thought and heart are engaged about the heavenly message, and the man "heareth the word and understandeth it. " By being understood lovingly, the truth gets into the man, and then it roots, it grows, it fruits, it rewards the sower. We must aim at the inward apprehension and comprehension of the Word of God; for only in this way can we be made fruitful by it.

Be it ours to aim to be among those who bear fruit an hundredfold! Ah, we would give our Lord ten thousandfold if we could. For every sermon we hear we should endeavor to do a hundred gracious, charitable, or selfdenying acts. Our divine Sower, with such heavenly seed, deserves to be rewarded with a glorious harvest.

Matthew 13:24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.

Still to give us often the key-note of this gospel, our Lord speaks of "the kingdom of heaven "; and to continue his method of making truth so clear that only the willfully blind should fail to see it, he brings forth another plain and pregnant similitude. We know right well that "man which sowed good seed in his field,. " Right well he sowed it; he sowed it in his own chosen ground, "his field. " and right good was the seed he sowed. He is gone within his heavenly house, and has left his field to the care of his servants. Alas, that care is by no means what it should be!

Matthew 13:25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

The servants are all too apt to sleep. There is a season when nature requires them to do so, and there are other times when sinful sloth persuades them to the same indulgence. Good, easy men, they cannot believe that anyone would do harm to their master's field; besides, watching and driving away trespassers is unpleasant work. "Heresy-hunting" is the nickname for watchfulness. "Rigid Puritanism" is the contemptuous title for careful discipline. "Bigotry" is the title by which faithfulness is described. "While men slept" could any cultured person resist the spirit of the times, and keep awake? "His enemy came": we know who the enemy is. His time for work is in the night. He sleeps not when watchmen are steeped in slumber; but then is he specially active. Quietly, cunningly, without observation, that malicious one sowed the darnel, the bastard wheat; a something so like wheat that no one could tell the difference till they began to ripen. He brought in those who loved "modern thought", and worldly amusements, who were by their talk Christian, and by their boasts profoundly spiritual; and having introduced them cunningly, he departed. He might have been suspected had he lingered upon the scene of his craft; and so he "went his way" to do the like elsewhere. His dear children all declared that he did not exist, but was a mere myth; and as he had gone away, many concluded that they were right.

Satan is not omnipresent, but this he cunningly turns into an advantage, for he can often do more by his absence than by his presence. A known devil is only half a devil.

Matthew 13:26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Good seed grows, and, alas! evil seed is equally full of the power to increase. Satan's principles have a terrible vitality and rigor in them. Both seeds were for a while hidden but when one "sprung up" the other "appeared also." The darnel is up as soon as the wheat, and it looks so like it that it appears to be the selfsame thing. The field is ruined; its yield is poisoned by the mixture of a pernicious plant. What had the enemy gained for himself?

Nothing: it was enough for him that he had injured the man he hated.

Matthew 13:27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?

Now they wake up: it had been better to have kept awake. They see the evil growth, though they did not see the evil sowing. Overwhelmed with the sight of the spoiled field, they hastened to tell their lord, wondering much how such a state of things could have come about. What a question to ask of their master: "Whence hath it tares?" They were sure that he sowed "good seed", and nothing else; and they evidently thought that he would know who sowed the bastard wheat. We, too, wonder how so much evil can have entered into a region wherein Christ has set his ministers, and we cry out in astonishment, "From whence then hath it tares?" The question is best left with the Master; but the asking it is a confession that we have been asleep.

Matthew 13:28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

The householder had not slept. He knew who had done the cruel wrong.

He who is the enemy of God and man, and he only, had perpetrated this piece of malice. It may have seemed to be a learned doctor, or a clever poet, or a treacherous orator, who scattered doubt among the people, and introduced skeptics into the church; but the worker behind the scenes, the real author of the mischief, is always the devil himself. The servants were eager to undo the mischief at once in the first way that suggested itself. Out with the false wheat, and let the true wheat grow! A thing more easy to propose than to do; but one which would naturally occur to all true servants who were sorry for their neglect, and eager to set matters right. Had there been weeds in the corn, the hoe could have removed them; but this darnel grew on the wheat, and was like the wheat, and thus was the true picture of those in the church and in the world, who are nominal Christians, and fair moralists, but who know nothing of the life of God. We cannot get rid of these, and yet how often we wish we could!

Matthew 13:29. But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

The darnel was so plentiful, had become so intermixed with the corn, and was so much like it, that it would not be possible to cut up the one without pulling up the other also. In fact, there was a false wheat which grew upon the true corn, and to part these would be perilous to the crop. Hasty disciplinarians have often cast out the best and retained the worst. Where evil is clear and open, we may not hesitate to deal with it; but where it is questionable, we had better hold our hand till we have fuller guidance.

Matthew 13:30. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Suffer the two seeds to remain together for a season, that they may be the more effectually separated later on. It is true the evil will hinder and hamper the good; but even this will be better than that you should cast out the good by mistake. A separation time will come, and that will be "in the time of harvest " when both will be fully developed. That will be a fit season, when the division can be made and no harm done thereby. The reapers then employed will do the work correctly, efficiently, universally, and finally. For the false wheat there will be burning in bundles; for the true, ingathering into the Lord's own storehouse. This will be a perfect separation, and we are bidden to wait for it. Our Lord's "I will say to the reapers " may very well keep us from making any hasty speeches to the elders of the churches, or to the magistrates of the land, so as to excite them to hurried and ungenerous discipline. Thorns and thistles they can root up, but the darnel is another matter. Magistrates and churches may remove the openly wicked from their society; the outwardly good who are inwardly worthless they must leave; for the judging of hearts is beyond their sphere.

Our Lord declares that the doom of the false wheat, the bastard professors, is terrible. Bind them in bundles; put like with like, sinner with like sinner. To burn them. No words can be more suggestive of terrible destruction. After this what a quiet, peaceful tone we hear in the words, "Gather the wheat into my barn. " All gathered, all recognized as the Lord's own, all housed in his storehouse.

Matthew 13:31, 32. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Mustard seed is the least of all seeds in proportion to that which comes of it; but it has a peculiar life in it, and therefore it produces so great a growth. The man in the parable we know: his field is the church, or the heart; he takes the seed which, perhaps, others neglect because they think it so small; he sows the living seed in his own field, and watches over it. It grows and grows, till at length it becomes the greatest among herbs , and is like to a tree. The results of the divine life in the soul are by no means little; but great graces, great projects, and great deeds are produced by it.

The work of grace in the church and in the individual, is so apparent, that persons who know as little about heavenly things as linnets and sparrows, come and find shelter beneath the holy and beneficent influences and institutions which are its outgrowth.

We could not have guessed that our Lord and his twelve apostles would produce the myriad churches of Christendom. We cannot even now tell whereto a humble effort to do good may grow. We know not to what our own inner life will come. It has an expanding power within it, and it will burst every bond, and grow to a thing which will cast shadow, yield fruit, and lend shelter. If the Lord has planted the incorruptible seed within, its destiny is a great one.

Good Master, hasten this blessed development. We have seen nearly enough of the mustard seed; now let us see the tree.

Matthew 13:33. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Many expositors argue that this relates to the power of evil in the church, or in the heart. On this interpretation we see why

“a woman took ” the leaven, and why she was so secret about it, that it is said she hid it.

According to the rule which is observed in the use of this symbol, leaven must be taken as the type of evil; and if the rule must be applied in this case, the teaching is obvious and valuable. The leaven soon began its corrupting influence in the church, and it continues, in one form or other, working still.

But the connection does not lead us so to interpret. The parable begins with the same words as the other, “The kingdom of heaven is like ”; and there is not a word to warn us that the theme is changed, and that our Lord is not now speaking of the kingdom itself, but of evil in the kingdom.

Moreover, our Lord does not say, “shall be like”, but “is like ”, referring, therefore, to something then in operation; and we really fail to see that the woman had then hidden the leaven, much less hidden it “in three measures of meal ”, that is to say, in a large church. Is not leaven here used simply as another picture of an influence which appears feeble, but turns out to be active, conquering, and at length all-pervading? This, though hidden in obscurity, in the midst of nations comparable to “three measures of meal ”, wrought with a mysterious rapidity, and will still continue to work in the whole mass of the world, and subdue the nations to itself. Let our friends take their choice of the two interpretations, and learn a good lesson from either or both. From evil leaven, the Lord preserve us; by holy influences may we all be wrought upon!

Matthew 13:34, 35. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that; it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

That prophet was David, or Asaph. The Psalm (<197801> 78.) begins, “Give ear, O my people, to my law.” By whom could this be spoken but by God? and yet in the third verse this same person speaks of “our fathers”; and therefore he must be a man. Here, then, in this seventy-eighth psalm, is the sacred person who is both God and man, and to our Lord Jesus Christ the language is most fitly applied by the evangelist. Our Lord speaks hidden things, and sets forth secret things in an open parable, which is understood by those who have had the eyes of their understanding opened, while those who are self-blinded perceive not his meaning. These parables contain ancient secrets and deep mysteries; and, may be, there is more of prophecy in them than we have yet perceived.

Matthew 13:36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

Possibly, they had made out the mustard seed and the leaven, but the tares remained a puzzle to them. We are not sorry for this, since, through their ignorance, we obtain our Lord’s own interpretation. We should certainly have missed our way without it.

Matthew 13:37. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man.

He came to this world on purpose to sow the kingdom of heaven in it. All the grace, and truth, and spiritual life among us is of his sowing.

Matthew 13:38. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.

The field is the world, including the church; but the field is not the church exclusively: for “the good seed ”, or “the children of the kingdom ”, is much the same as the church, and the evil seed are persons who mingle with the people of God, and live together with them in necessary association in the great field of the world. Churchfellowship is not particularly aimed at, though it is encompassed by the terms used. Bigots have tried to extirpate heretics, and national churches have even forbidden unsound thinkers to remain in the country; but all attempts at securing any region from having infidels or heretics residing in it have soured into persecution. Nowhere on earth can we maintain a settlement of saints alone. In many cases, the cruel treatment of the very best of men has been produced by the notion that they were erroneous teachers, and therefore ought not to be tolerated.

To contend earnestly against error by spiritual means is right and needful, but to use carnal weapons, and other remedies of force, is absolute folly and wickedness. This world is now a field of mingled growths, and so it must be till the end come.

Matthew 13:39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world and the reapers are the angels.

The devil is the sower of evil men. There were none such till he came into Paradise; but now they are everywhere, not only in the field of the world, but in the garden of the church. Now is the time of growing: the harvest hastens on, and the reapers are already chosen by the great householder.

We may rejoice that angels, and not men, are the reapers. At what hour the consummation of the age (R. V.) shall come we do not know, but it is surely drawing nigh.

Matthew 13:40-42. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

What a description! The outgathering of "all things that offend ", and of all persons who cause others to stumble, and who work evil, will be a consummation devoutly to be wished. Not only the outwardly wicked, but the false pretenders, the mock wheat, shall be removed. This will be the purging not of the church, but of the kingdom, which at that time will include the whole field of the world. We could not effect this clearance, but the Lord's own angels can, and will. This shall be "in the end of this world ", the finis and climax of this dispensation. The fate of these ungodly ones will be fire, the most terrible of punishments; but this will not annihilate them; for they shall exhibit the surest tokens of a living woe "wailing and, gnashing of teeth. " Sooner or later, this is what must come of evil men. Though in this world they flourish in the same field with believers, and can hardly be discerned from them, they shall be removed from such honorable association, and be cast, with the rubbish of the universe, into that great "furnace of fire " whose smoke goeth up for ever and ever. This the Son of man will do with authority; the angels are simply the executioners of the wrath of the Lamb.

Matthew 13:43. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Relieved of the cloud created by compulsory association with mere pretenders, the righteous shall shine forth. The kingdom always was their Father's, and now shall they be seen to be his heirs, and, in consequence, inheritors of his glory and joy. Till then they must be, to a great extent, concealed by those who intrude their unworthy presence, and keep them in a measure of darkness through the world-mixture. The intruders being removed by the angel executioners, "the righteous " will gain a distinct manifestness of character, which will cause their excellence to be as clearly seen as the sun at noon-day. This is good hearing for them; and as they have "ear to hear ", let them hear it with delighted attention.

Matthew 13:44. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Still the theme is "the kingdom of heaven. " The man lighted upon hid treasure; perhaps while he was ploughing or digging. He was not looking for it, yet he found it. Is it not written, "I am found of them that sought me not"? To obtain a right to the treasure-trove, the finder must buy the field; and to do this he parts with "all that he hath. " So do men act when they discover the riches of the gospel. So did Jesus himself, at the utmost cost, buy the world to gain his church, which was the treasure which he desired.

The special application of the parable we leave to the reader. Practically he will do well to become the chief actor in a similar incident. Gladly may he part with all that he has to make sure of the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 13:45, 46. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had

found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Observe that in this instance the precious thing was not met with by accident, but discovered after an intelligent search for it. The first parable, is descriptive of the ordinary man, to whom the gospel comes when he is following his calling, and by no means earnest after spiritual things. He turns up a crock of gold while ploughing, and having enough sense to prefer gold to clods, he buys the field and the treasure. In the present parable the actor is not a ploughman, but a merchant, dealing in precious things. This man is a superior person, aware of the value of jewels, and seeking them as the business of his life. He is a thoughtful, earnest individual, anxious after the best things; and therefore he reads, he hears, he considers and searches, even as a jeweler would do who is seeking goodly pearls. He discovers the gospel, and rightly judges "the kingdom of heaven " to be the pearl of pearls, and therefore sacrifices all things else that he may have it in his own possession. In both cases all was sold to win the prize; and so in any case, however our conversion takes place, we must give up all for Christ; not of compulsion, but willingly. It must be a pleasure to us to make sacrifices; indeed, we must consider them to be no sacrifices, just as those two men were eager and anxious to sell all their property to get possession of the one treasure which would make them rich for life.

Matthew 13:47, 48. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

Here, among men, the "kingdom of heaven " is as a seine or draw-net. It encompasses a great area of water, and entangles within it all kinds of creatures that move in the sea. The net-casting is a success, for the net gathers, and is full . Yet the success may not be so great as it seems; for the contents of the net are varied; it gathered of every kind. So long as it is in the water, it contains bad and good, of necessity. It cannot be otherwise; and it would be idle to set about sorting the things which it encompasses while yet in the sea. On the shore will be the place for separation: the worthless, useless, and corrupt will be castaways, even though they were once in the net; but the truly precious will be taken from the net and presented to their Lord. We must now stand and fish, casting the net, and waiting for a haul; not till the end shall we sit down and sort out our takings. Many are trying to do the last thing first.

Matthew 13:49, 50. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The separation between "the wicked " and "the just ", who are in the kingdom, will be at the close of the dispensation. It will be accomplished by the messengers of God, the appointed angels: it will be done infallibly, readily, fully, and finally. The doom of the wicked is described in terms which are terrible to the last degree. Those who would have us think lightly of the punishment of the ungodly have no countenance in the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Neither does the idea that fire causes annihilation find any support from the metaphor here employed; for in the furnace of fire "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. "

Matthew 13:51. Jesus said unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, lord.

This is a very important question. To understand truth is essential, to understand it all is desirable. The mere letter or parable, without a sense of the meaning, will neither quicken nor sanctify. As food must be eaten, digested, and assimilated, so must truth be taken up and taken in by the mind. Could we say, "Yea, Lord ", if he were to inquire of us? Do we even understand the seven parables which he has here given us? Did those who said "Yea, Lord ", comprehend the Master's teaching as they might have done? Probably their view of their own understanding was not so lowly as it might have been.

Matthew 13:52. Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Our first desire should be that we ourselves may be "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven ": a remarkable phrase. This done, we are each one appointed to be like a householder, and are made responsible for using our knowledge as food for all in our house. What we understand we must teach. What we have received into our treasure we must bring forth. If the Lord has instructed us unto

his kingdom, it is for the sake of others.

Toward these we must act as one who keeps house, and brings out provisions for the family. Some things have been laid up to ripen, and these the steward fetches out in due season; others are the better for being fresh from the garden; and these he serves up at once. He keeps back nothing; but he does not confine his provision to one single thing. He is not weary of the old; he is not afraid of the new. Old truth is made new by a living experience: new views of truth, if indeed it be truth, are only the old in a fresh light. We must in our instruction of others cultivate variety, but we must not aim at it by poisoning the children with deadly drugs for the sake of giving them novel dishes. Only things worth putting into a treasury are worth bringing forth to the household. That scribe had need be well instructed who has to keep on handing out a variety of precious truth throughout a long life.

Lord, make us sufficient for these things. Instruct us, that we may instruct our household. May we make no reserve for self, but bring out for thy people all that which thou hast put in our charge. Oh, to be accepted of thee in the day of thy return, because found faithful to our trust!

Matthew 13:53. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

He stayed not to overdo what had been so well done. When he had “finished ” he left of. When he had completed his ministry in a place “he departed thence. ”

MATTHEW 13:54-58 THE KING IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

Matthew 13:54. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?

With what emotion did our Lord return to his native place! How ready he was to associate with former friends, for “he taught them in their synagogue. ” How eagerly they came together to hear their young countryman, who had made so great a stir! How amazed they were at the masterly way in which he touched great subjects, and wrought great deeds!

Astonishment led to enquiry. They began to ask how it could be. The question, “Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? ” might have been brought forward reverently, and have led to their obtaining a most instructive reply; but some flavored their question with impertinent unbelief, and this cost them dear.

Lord, grant that my questions may never savor of incredulity. Give me to be astonished at what thou dost, and yet not to be astonished that THOU shouldst be able to do such mighty works.

Matthew 13:55, 56. Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?

His pedigree seemed to them to be of them lowliest. He had sprung from among themselves: his reputed father was a village artisan; his mother was plain Mary, and his relations commonplace parties enough. This ought to have gratified and encouraged them; but it did not. They grew sarcastic, and harped upon the family names of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas. They hinted that he could not have learned much wisdom in a carpenter's shop; and as he had not been among the rabbis to obtain a superior education, he could not really know much. How could he have attained to such eminence? He was a mere nobody. Why, they knew him when his parents lost him when they went up to the feast at Jerusalem!

They could not listen to the talk of the carpenter's son.

Matthew 13:57. And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

They stumbled at that which should have been a stepping-stone for them.

Poor souls! How like to many in these days, who must have glitter and pretense, or they think nothing of the profoundest wisdom! If they can understand a sermon, they conceive that it cannot be a good one; if a man acts simply and naturally, he cannot in their eyes be worthy of much notice.

Still is it commonly the case that, where a man is known, his neighbors find it hard to think that he can be really great. Distance lends enchantment: a cloud increases the apparent size. This is folly.

Matthew 13:58. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Unbelief bound his hands. Why should he spend his sacred energy among a people who would not be profited thereby? Where he would have chosen to do most, he was forced to do least, because he saw that all he did would be wasted on them. The Lord save us from such a state of mind!

Give us, O Lord, faith to the full; that for us, and in us, and by us, thou mayest be able to do many mighty works of grace!