

Matthew 20-11-22b

Thank you Dan and Anna and Lori for that reminder as we approach the Thanksgiving season of all of the things that we can be thankful for and praise the Lord for the positive things. We're in a social time and a political time and a world event time where we really have to remember to apply the exhortation that whatsoever things are good and pure and noble of good report. And we studied that and understand that when you translate it very precisely, it is to the extent that things are pure, to the extent that they are honest, to the extent that they are noble, to the extent that they are lovely.

And so as we look around and we see many things to be concerned about, to be worried about, you know, pandemic this and economy that and administration this and controversy that, in a time of Thanksgiving, the exhortation is for the beauty of the earth, for all of the wonderful blessings that God has bestowed on us. All I have to do is picture in my mind past video clips of people exiting their country with all of their possessions wrapped in a bed sheet slung over their back as refugees to realize that my problems, my challenges are minor and I have many, many blessings to be thankful for. And in this time of Thanksgiving, to not overlook and choose to concentrate on the blessings that God has given us.

And speaking of brothers, by the way, I am always impressed and thankful for the work of Brother Matthew to bring us the wonderful pieces of video and music that he weaves together to make our church services elegant. They're not just done decently and in good order, but they're done beautifully and it's such a blessing and a compliment to our study of the word of God to have these additional ministries from people who are faithful behind the scenes. And there are many who minister in terms of encouragement, of support.

It reminds me, if you've watched a movie lately and you see maybe three or four primary actors on the screen in the way that I'm on the screen right now, then when they roll the credits, there are just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who contributed to the making of that screen effort. And I feel that way about our Bible classes. There are so many contributions, everyone in our fellowship, whether it's words of encouragement or fellowship and support before at the break and after the lesson and so on.

Those of you that pray for each other and keep up with each other and remember each other, this is the healthy function of the body of Christ. Every member fitly joined together and functioning as a unit with individual purposes, individual functions, and all of it being a blessing to the rest of us. So at this season, I am thankful for each one of you.

I'm thankful for Dan and Lori and Anna Lynn. I'm thankful for Matthew in particular as those who are at the forefront of enabling us to worship as a church and to have

fellowship and to enjoy each other's appreciation for God, for the Lord Jesus, and for His Word, even though many of us are scattered at great distances. So as we return now to our study in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 13, the Lord Jesus has delivered this parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils.

It's hard to just call it the parable of the sower because it's not really about the sower. It's not really the parable of the seed because the seed doesn't change and it's not so much about the seed as it is the reception of the seed. And this began as we saw in our first session this morning in the previous chapter.

With whom does the Lord Jesus choose to commune and to talk? There are those outside wanting to speak with you. Jesus says, look around. These are the people who want to speak with me and these are the ones that I prioritize just as I do my mother and my brothers.

And so then He is going to go on to tell this parable that is about hearers. The parable of the seed, sower, soils is what happens when the word is delivered, when it is spoken. What happens to us after Bible class, after church? What happens? We are in the word of God.

God, the Holy Spirit is present and overcoming the limitations of the presentation and overcoming our distractions and our various anomalies that might prevent us from in our human strength. The carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit. They are spiritually discerned.

But God, the Holy Spirit makes it possible, available, perspicacious, knowable. So it devolves onto us. So when the disciples ask and say, why do you speak to them in parables? Parables were nothing new in Israel.

If you look at rabbinical communication, rabbinical thought, parables were a favorite method. So it is interesting that the disciples ask, why are you speaking to them in parables? The rabbinical parables were kind of a blunt instrument, real obvious, you cannot miss the point. Jesus' parables, you could almost add a demonstrative to the question that the disciples have.

Why are you speaking to them with these parables? These are not like the parables the rabbis tell. Well, you know, there was a tree and it got cut down and turned into a post, and now it doesn't bear fruit. Oh, okay, that's not hard.

But Jesus' parables, the point was not immediately apparent to many. And this parable is not going to be understandable at first blush, even to the disciples. And they are the ones who have, and to them it has been given to know.

But they don't get the parable. They don't walk away and say, oh, well, of course, you know, the seed, that's the gospel of the kingdom and the birds are the evil one and so

on. They don't get that.

So you get an idea that there might be a little bit of self-interest in this question when they say, why do you speak to them in parables? They're also saying, why do you speak to us in parables? Many times, you know, you ask a question about others, but you kind of want to know for yourself. Dear Abby, I know someone who's got a situation. What's the right thing to do? And that someone is actually you.

So Jesus says, it's been given to you to know, but to them, it has not been given. Why? You have something already that they don't have. You have interest, you have motivation, you have questions.

You're the one asking. They're not coming up and asking about this parable. You have asked.

Ask and it shall be given. If you want to be one of those to whom it is given, ask. It's not divine sovereign omnipotence at work here.

It's response to request. If you want it, you can have it. If you want it, it's yours.

Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.

But if you don't knock, if you don't look, if you don't ask, go back and read Proverbs 2, my son, if you will. In fact, just keep your finger here in Matthew because this is directly pertinent. Keep it here and flip back to Proverbs chapter 2. It's been a while since we looked at this in the flesh in the text.

I would write Proverbs 2, 1 through 11 in the margin next to Matthew 13. My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you, whose choice is involved here? The speaker is speaking words and issuing commands, right? So where is the choice involved? Is the speaker not saying words that should be said or not giving commands that should be given? They're given. It's the reception that is the issue.

If you receive my words, if you treasure my commands within you, take them on board, put them in your heart so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Notice the progression here. At first you just receive and treasure, which means store up.

This doesn't mean treasure like, oh, I value this above all others. A treasury in Greek, this is the word thesaurus. A thesaurus is a treasury of words.

So you collect them, you gather them and put them all on a shelf. You put them in a box, you keep them. You gather them, you collect them and you keep them.

If you receive my words and keep my commands within you so that you incline your ear to wisdom, you started out just receiving, very passive, but now there's a little bit of

action here. Oh, there are some more words. There are some more commands.

I'm going to incline my ear. I'm going to make a little bit of an effort to gather more of these and I'm going to apply my heart to understanding. I'm not just going to collect these.

I'm going to figure out what they mean and how they pertain to me. Now look at verse three. If you cry out for discernment, I'm not just receiving and I'm not just inclining.

I'm asking, have you got more of that? Can I have some additional words, some additional commands? And I'm a little puzzled by what you said. I'm not just asking for words and commands. I want the understanding.

I'm asking for discernment. I'm asking for the ability to really understand this and see its pertinence and its applicability. I'm crying out for that and I'm lifting up my voice.

Notice this is not a quiet request. This is sort of a shout to get attention. We do this in a classroom.

It used to be in a polite classroom. You'd raise your hand to get the teacher's attention so that you could make your request. Now look at verse four.

If you seek her as silver, now we're going on expeditions. We're packing. We're traveling.

We're taking provisions with us. This is worth hunting down and finding at cost and sacrifice and time and expense. Seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures.

There's a lot of digging. Have you ever messed with a metal detector? I was intrigued by this and knowing that there's been occupation in the area around our house for decades, if not centuries. When I was a kid, I found a 1907 Indian head penny just laying out there in the sand by our house.

And so I thought, well, a metal detector. I'll go around here and see what I can find. The thing about a metal detector, each of them should come with a hand spade, a trowel, because you can't just, you know, you walk around, it goes whoop, whoop, and it makes a noise.

Well, what is that? It's not something laying on the surface. And all people who do metal detecting for a hobby carry a collection of spades, trowels, depending on the depth and how far down they think things are. But you've got to dig for the treasure.

Sometimes it's just a button or it's a rusty nail or it's an old hinge or something, especially around here. I doubt there's much by way of gold coinage to be found, but you dig. You seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures.

I'm willing to dig and dig and I'll find the buttons and I'll find the rusty old pieces of metal because I'm looking for that treasure. I want to find something that's valuable. So you start at a very passive level and graduate to a very active level.

And at the point that what you have more is given and now you've got some and more is given and you keep getting more and more because you're asking and seeking and knocking. Verse five, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. You will understand and you will find.

Seek and you will find. This is the Old Testament equivalent of Jesus' words. Seek and you will find.

Notice verse six, Jesus says, to you it has been given. What does verse six say? The Lord gives wisdom from his mouth, come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for who? For those who care enough to walk in its light and be upright.

How do you know how to walk up rightly? You've got to know the word and know what its requirements and standards and prohibitions are. He stores up sound wisdom for the people who care enough about it to live in its light, the upright. He is a shield to whom? Those who walk uprightly.

God's not everybody's shield. So if I want God to be my shield, if I want God to store up and deliver to me sound wisdom, what do I need to be? What do I need to choose? The upright life, the worthy walk. He guards the paths of justice and preserves the way of his sanctified ones, the ones who have cleansed themselves at God's fountain.

And when you do that, you will understand righteousness and justice, equity, every good path. If you've ever been on a hike and they've got multiple trails and there are some that are steep, some that are easy, you go to Carlsbad Caverns, you can take the elevator or you can take the path. I want a good path.

I don't want a bad path. I don't want to turn my ankle halfway down the side of the Grand Canyon. Every good path.

Everybody wants a good path, but are you willing to qualify for that to be communicated? Are you willing to do what it takes to have so that more can be given? You need to have a receptive mind. You need to have a collecting heart. You need to have an ear that is inclined and a heart that is applied.

You need to have a voice that will cry out, ask in prayer, lift up your voice for understanding. Then you will understand, verse 9, righteousness and justice. What is the right thing? What is just? What is fair? Every good path.

Wisdom enters your heart. Knowledge is pleasant. When knowledge is pleasant to your soul.

Knowledge is not pleasant. God's knowledge is not pleasant to every soul because with it comes conviction, with it comes instruction, rebuke and correction in righteousness. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens and He scourges every son whom He receives.

In John 15, when Jesus says, I'm the vine, you're the branches, abide in me, bear much fruit. If you start bearing fruit, my Father is going to prune you. There's going to be some hard situations where things are pruned away.

You're going to have to leave some things behind. Some things are going to be taken away so that there's more room to reflect God's glory. When knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you and understanding will keep you.

You lift up your voice for understanding, understanding will preserve you, deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things. There is an awful lot of evil and a lot of perversity being spoken in our world today, unparalleled in human history. Unparalleled.

Hockey stick graph, clear off the top of the page. You can get a legal sheet of paper and print portrait and the hockey stick of evil speaking is still going to be off the top of that page. It's unprecedented.

Never has it been at the global pervasive level that the internet and modern media have perpetrated. From those, verse 13, who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil. Society used to sort of maintain a level of shame.

It was shameful to live an evil lifestyle. It was shameful to shack up out of wedlock. It was shameful to have children without benefit of marriage.

It was shameful to be engaged in crime. It was, it was shameful to not work and make your own way. It was shameful to not care for your family.

It was shameful to not be faithful to your vows. It was shameful to abandon your loved ones and to live a life of self-gratification and society rightly looked on people to endeavor to make them ashamed. You know, there's been this huge reaction against shame and blame and all the rest, but listen, shame is a good thing.

You want to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed. Paul says, you need to be faithful that you are not ashamed at his coming. God will invoke shame.

So it's not an evil thing. There are things that need shaming. There are things that need blaming.

That's why there is rebuke and correction as a part of God's word. I don't want to be ashamed. Those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in ways of darkness, rejoice

in doing evil and delight in the perversity of the wicked.

There's people who actually find this stuff. Entertaining, enjoyable flame wars on the internet, cancel culture, uh, mob someone and shout them down and, and drive them out of public discourse, uh, make them a pariah pile on. People love this.

Whose ways verse 15 are crooked and who are devious in their paths. Wisdom will deliver you from immoral woman, the seductress who flatters with her words. And this is not just physical seduction.

This is not just the young man who gets waylaid. Uh, the seductress is put for anything that tempts us and, uh, appeals to the priori and, and to the salacious and to the, the, uh, shameful side of our nature flattery. It, uh, appeals to our self-esteem and so on.

Well, back to Matthew chapter 13, it has been given to you. I hope we've established that there is a reason why it has been given. It was given to the disciples because they made a choice.

It is given to us when we make that same choice. So verse 13, therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see this very interesting. And again, I'm not going to go into Greek.

I'm sorely tempted, but there's a difference in Hina and Hati. One means so that, and the other means because, or can mean because. And if you go to the parallel accounts in Luke and Mark, um, this says, because seeing, and it's not a bad translation, but in, in Mark and Luke, it says, so that, and so which is it? Did Jesus say it two different ways? Uh, many times when you're faced with a choice like this, the answer is not, well, it's either because, or, you know, it's, this is a result.

And the reason that, uh, I speak to them in parables is because they can't see, and they can't hear properly. And in the other gospels, it says, so that they're not going to see and hear properly. Well, which is it? What do you think? What am I going to say? It's both.

It's in scripture both ways, because both are true. What did Jesus just get through saying to him who has more will be given? Why do these people get parables? Because they have not to you. It's been given to them.

It has not been given. Why has it not been given? Because when they hear, they don't listen. When they see, they don't perceive their heart is calloused over just as Isaiah, the prophet described and foretold.

And so why does Jesus continue to speak, but he's speaking in parables so that that same pattern is going to continue. Both are true seeing. They do not see, they see, but they don't see sounds like a contradiction, but we understand this.

Look at reporting on the news. Here's a riot, which part of it is, is taken on board. One side looks and says, these rascals, they're breaking the law.

They're, they're burning down businesses that belong to people with whom they sympathize and are sympathetic to their cause and the rest of it. This is just nonsensical. What's going on.

Other people look and say the very same thing. They see it and they say, you know, this status quo, uh, isn't changing by normal means. The normal democratic processes and appealing and voting and legislating is not working.

We've got to shake the tree. We've got to do some damage. We've got to crack some eggs to make this omelet.

And yeah, there's going to be some collateral damage and, but it's, it's for a greater good. And in the short term, yes, we're breaking the law, but you know, civil disobedience has been a tool to affect social change forever. And that's what we're using.

Well, which side is right. I'm not going to opine because it depends on what you're talking about, but you can look at the same thing and see it in different ways. What determines how you see rioting in a city as we've seen this year? What determines that? What do you already have? We we're all confirmation bias people.

And to what we have, we're going to add more in the sense. And we're going to see it as necessary defensible. I'm going to grab a baseball bat and go join them because something's got to change.

This has gone on too long. There's too much injustice and a small injustice is justified to correct a large injustice. And there's, there's merit in that argument, uh, in the minds of many and in, in various situations, uh, the American war for independence from Britain was violence perpetrated.

You know, doesn't the Bible say, fear God, honor the King. Well, they didn't honor the King. They broke away from the King.

So here's violence and warfare and breaking the King's law and defying the King's, uh, mandates for what was seen to be a greater cause. So how is it different? How is it the same? This is why there's political debate, but what's my point. We're talking about spiritual things and there is no debate.

There is one God. And there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ, Jesus, no one comes to the father, but by him, his teaching is clear. It is righteous.

It reflects wisdom and justice and, and the right path that we saw in Proverbs chapter

two. So when Jesus teaches, you don't get to pick a side and well, faithful men will disagree. You either agree with the Lord Jesus reflecting the truth of God, the father, and the ministry of God's Holy spirit, or you are in big trouble.

There's not an alternate. You can be one party or another. You can be one persuasion or another in a lot of things, not in spiritual things.

There is God's way. And there's the highway, the Broadway that leads to destruction. We choose, but there's no way to be right.

When you're rejecting the teaching of the Lord Jesus, there's no way to be right. Therefore I speak to them in parables because, and so that it's been true in the past. And that's why they have not.

And even what they have is going to be taken away. And it's going to be true in the future because seeing they do not see there is provision. There is grace from God to see what God is talking about.

It has been made available. There's no excuse to not see how many blind people has Jesus given sight to as an example. And as a sign, he's fulfilling the old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 61 to open blind eyes, right? We just read that within the last week, Isaiah 61.

I think it was in the Owasso study to open blind eyes. That's why Jesus came. What if Jesus opens your eyes and you still refuse to see John chapter nine, got a whole chapter of John devoted to the healing of the blind man and the subsequent discussion with the religious authorities.

They interview his parents, they talk to him and he says, why do you keep asking me these questions? Do you want to follow him also? Like I do. Pharisees asked Jesus, are we blind also? Because they get the point of these blindness stories and these blindness miracles. Are we blind also? Jesus says, if you were blind, you would have no sin.

If you would acknowledge instead of asking me, are we blind? Coming to me and saying, Lord, I am blind. I need the healing in my spirit that you're providing these people in the flesh. They don't come and say, Lord, I confess I'm blind.

I need your grace, your power, your work in my life. They come and ask, so are we blind? You know, as the second class condition, if, and it's not true. And he says, if you were blind, if you would acknowledge your blindness, you would have no sin because repentance is the basis for forgiveness.

But because you say we see your sin remains seeing. They do not see hearing. They do not hear, nor do they understand.

And in them, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says hearing you will hear and shall not understand seeing you will see and not perceive for the hearts of this people have grown dull. The heart is the seat of decision. It is this place where we establish our goals, our priorities and our values.

Hearts have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes, they have closed. If God was a Calvinist, God would close their eyes, but they have closed their eyes.

Their ears are hard of hearing. There are sounds, but it's like the voice of God at the on the Damascus road, the interested parties here. This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

Everyone else hears thunder. They hear, but they don't comprehend why previous decisions have dulled their hearing, dulled their sight, dulled their heart. This is a product of choice.

I have a lot to say about choice and I don't have time to cover it this morning. We're going to look at it next Sunday morning. We're going to be in the Old Testament.

We're going to see David being chased by Saul. We're going to see the apostle Paul being shipwrecked, and we're going to see what God has to say in his word about sovereignty and about choice. One example in the Old Testament, one example in the new.

If I had a third session this morning, we'd cover it right now, but we're out of time this morning. What is the pertinence? We observe, we interpret, and we apply. What should we do in the light of what we have seen thus far? And we haven't even seen Jesus interpret the nature of these soils yet, but what do we know? It's a simple question.

Do I want to be Jesus' mother and brothers and sisters? Do I want the Lord Jesus to speak to me and to reveal understanding and wisdom and every good path? Do I want that from the Lord or do I not? If I do, I have options available to me. God, in His grace, has made His word, His people, His spirit, opportunity to approach Him by way of request, to ask and to seek and to knock. It is open to anyone.

We first have to have the humility to recognize that we have a need. People that have no sense of need have no appreciation for deliverance, no appreciation for what God supplies and what God offers. Pharisees had no sense of need.

We see, we're fine. Jesus said, that's why you've still got sin. That's why you're going to be in the darkness, which is outside, where there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, because you have no sense of need.

You're self-sufficient. You think everything is going fine. Lord, I am blind.

I cannot navigate. I can't redeem the time. I can't correct my inner faults.

I can't wash myself. I need the washing of water and the renewal of your Holy Spirit. I need correction and rebuke and instruction in righteousness.

I need to remember what I learned in Bible class last time and the time before that and the time before that. I am worried about what will happen at the judgment. I do not want to be ashamed.

Try me. See if there'll be any wicked way in me. Purge me with hyssop so that I can be clean.

Wash me and make me whiter than snow. It is a sense of need. That's our starting point.

That's where our change of mind is. God does everything from that point forward. And once we have, more will be given.

And as we walk by faith and not by sight, we find that we see better than those who think they have sight. We walk by faith and not by sight. And yet Jesus says, you need to see and really see.

You need to hear and really hear. You need to have a heart that's not dull, but is receptive. If you will receive my words, if you will treasure my commands within you, incline your ear, apply your heart, lift up your voice, seek it like treasure, then you will understand.

Then you will have, more will be given, and don't forget the last part, you will have abundance. That abundance is what we want when the judgment seat of Christ rolls around in the plan and program of God, as it inevitably will. 2 Timothy 4, verse 1, I charge you by God in heaven, by the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing.

Judgment's coming. How much time have we got left? I don't know, but I know that every second is worth redeeming in that light. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for how clearly it speaks to us, shows us where we are, where we need to go, and how to get there. We pray that as we reflect on these things, your Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, bring them to our memory, help us to see clearly how to make application, how these truths can make a difference in our conversation, in our thought life, in the ministry that we have to believers in our periphery, so that we can both be blessed and be a blessing as we await the soon return of your Son, the Lord Jesus, from heaven. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.