

Matthew 21-01-24b

As we continue our study now in Matthew chapter 13, I hope to have planted a clue as to the interpretation and application of these two parables in our first session without making it too easy. Um, but context is our friend context, the fabric that is woven together for us in the scriptures. If you're a little uncertain about what this particular part of the weave is, is revealing, it's like a fine Persian rug.

If you're looking very close and you see different colors and you say, well, I'm not real sure what this shape is. What do you do? You stand back and look at the larger picture, see the bigger pattern, and then it becomes clear. Oh, that is a, uh, pomegranate or that is, uh, another artful shape.

Well, we step back and look at this section of kingdom parables, and this, in my view, is our clue. I take nothing away from those who have, have seen other things and interpreted a different way. As we know, most of scripture is polyvalent.

I, that may be a made up word. I'm not sure, but it's got, it's got, I don't mean it has different truths, but there are multiple truths contained in it. There are many things that can be seen in a given passage or a given narrative or a given parable, a given prophecy.

It can have near and intermediate and far fulfillments, for example. And it's not that once I have found one, that is the only truth that can be all true. And yet it has additional adumbrations and echoes and applications further out.

That's true in prophecy. It's true in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Uh, and that's why old Testament truth is so important and pertinent for us.

As we observe it, interpret it and apply it. It's essential. These things were written for our instruction.

What we're looking at in the gospel of Matthew, this is all taught in the old Testament age to old Testament saints, all of it. Um, and it is confrontation with some of them who did not understand it and others who did, it was not given. We've seen this over the last few weeks.

It was not given to everyone to understand what Jesus was teaching. And these are people, there's a sense in which it is given to them as a teaching, but it's not given to them to understand it. And there's a reason it's not inscrutable.

It's not predestination. It's not for ordination. It's not, uh, you know, a Calvinist, uh, interpretation where, well, God, for reasons known only to himself, just through a dart at the phone book.

And some people are saved and others are not, there are reasons. And we saw this just remember back in the earlier part of this chapter. And this, by the way, I'm reviewing this because this helps us understand these two parables.

I'm not just killing time here. We need to understand this. Uh, the disciples asked him in verse 10 of this chapter, Matthew 13, why do you speak to them in parables? You're confusing them Lord.

And oh, by the way, you're kind of confusing us. Why do you speak to them in parables? Why don't you just come out and speak plainly? Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom. It's, it's something that's a little bit hidden.

A mystery is something that's not widely known, right? It has been given to you to understand and to know, but to them, it has not been given. Why has it not been given? Because they do not have the love of the father. You remember what is the triad of Christian virtues that we have seen so many times, especially in Paul's letters? What are they? Faith, hope, and love.

How do we, what's our memory aid for the function that those have in our lives? They're just abstractions until you think about their pertinence. Faith is what? Faith is the means we walk by faith. We live by faith.

We lay hold of righteousness by faith. We gain our initial salvation and our ongoing salvation by faith. Faith is the means.

This is how we get it done. Faith in the promises of God, faith in the principles of scripture, faith in the, uh, doctrines in the character of God, in the plan and purpose of God, as it has been revealed to us by means of faith. That's Hebrews chapter 11 by means of faith.

All of these wonderful things happen and men gained approval without faith. It is impossible to please him. The means of pleasing God is faith, living faith.

What is hope? Paul says, hope does not disappoint. It's the motivation. Hope is what we look forward to.

We live in hope. We expect the return of the Lord Jesus. We expect the resurrection and transformation of our departed loved ones.

We expect the future kingdom of the son and kingdom of the father. We have expectation, the fulfillments of God's promises that as Christ was raised, we shall be raised. The spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies.

Also hope of the future, hope of eternity, hope of being delivered from the body of this death. Book of Romans is, has a lot to say about hope. Peter has a lot to say about hope.

Look ahead. James has a lot to say about hope. Hope is the motivation.

This is why we want to walk by faith, why we want to implement the means of living. It's got a goal and a purpose and a destination. That's our hope, faith, hope, and love.

What is love? Love is the measure. Jesus told the Pharisees, you don't believe me because you don't have the love for the father is not present. You don't love the father.

That's why you don't believe me. And why was it given to the disciples to understand these parables? Why did Jesus explain the parables? Why does he breathe on them? The Holy Spirit, because they love the father. That's why Peter and Andrew and James and John were down at the Jordan before Jesus was ever revealed.

They loved the father. Simeon and Anna were down at the temple when Jesus was, was dedicated because they loved the father. The circle of friends that Anna spoke to, the people that Simeon prophesied to, uh, Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth, Zachariah, all of those people surrounding the birth that we've just so recently celebrated in December of, of all months, Jesus was born in the spring, but nevertheless, uh, love for the father first and greatest commandment.

Second is like unto it. Love one another. When that love is in us, when that love is, uh, present faith and hope are functioning and operating.

We are living by means of faith and we are driving toward the purpose and the goal, laying aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us. We press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It's it's hope.

So love is really the measure of where we are. If there's no love, if there's no, uh, sacrifice of self for the benefit of others, Jesus is the embodiment of love. And he gave himself for us.

And he gave himself to fulfill the father's plan and purpose. Jesus loves the father. And Jesus loved us.

We love the father. We love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have your doctrine exactly right by this.

Shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you understand all parables by this. Shall all men know that you are my disciples. How? Not those things that you love one another.

You're a follower of Christ. When you put yourself out, you constrain the law of love says, even though all things are lawful, all things are not edifying. So things that I am free to do, if I just think of myself, I am not going to do because I might harm or hinder or set back a fellow believer.

It's the law of love, the law of sacrifice. Jesus could have called 10,000 angels to destroy the world and set him free. But out of love, he did not do so.

He did not do what he could have done. What was well within his right to do. It would have been just, it would have been a foot stomping down evil, but it wasn't the time.

It wasn't the father's will. And the Lord Jesus was humble. He submitted himself and we are to do the same.

Well, the context here to you, it has been given to those outside. It is not given. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled.

Some here, but they don't understand. Some see, and they don't perceive. Some people have calloused hearts.

You remember that, uh, back in chapter 11, Jesus said, when John was out baptizing at the Jordan, what did you go out to see? This is verse seven, Matthew 11, seven. It's like the backwards of seven, 11 to 11, seven. What did you go out to see a reed shaken by the wind? What did you go out to see a man clothed in soft garments? What were you seeking? Hear me now.

What were you looking for when you went out and John was baptizing? Did you go out to see a prophet or did you go out to see a reed vibrating in the wind, making a noise or someone with a, with a superficial appearance? You know, sometimes you, you see a piece of entertainment and say, well, that's a triumph of form over substance. It looks real good. It's got a lot of, you know, good looking actors and actresses in it, but the story and plot itself isn't worth telling, but it really looks good.

Uh, this car really looks good. The engine doesn't run. The steering wheel is not connected, but it looks so great.

What did you go out to see somebody in soft garments? Were you going to be impressed by his wardrobe, his sense of style, his personal flair, his self-expression. Did you go out to hear which pronouns he chose for himself? What did you go out to hear? What did you go out to see? Did you go out to see a prophet? Jesus asks finally, because that's what you should have been looking for a prophet. Yes, I say to you and more than a prophet.

This is he of whom it was written. I'm going to send a prophet. I'm going to send my messenger.

If you went out there looking for a prophet, you went for the right reason. A lot of you didn't. A lot of you wanted to look at his clothes.

A lot of you wanted to hear this strange new thing. It was trending. It had a hashtag.

Everybody wanted to find out more about it. It was a meme and a trope, right? So a lot of

people went out there because there was a buzz about this strange activity going on at the hands of this strange man. Assuredly, verse 11, this is 11, 11 now of Matthew.

I say to you among those born of woman, there is not risen one greater than John the Baptist, but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. What does that tell you about the kingdom? John's not in it yet. And we know that this is future.

If a man born a woman, there's none greater than John, but whoever's least in the kingdom is, is greater. That means being in the kingdom as opposed to outside. It is greater than the greatest man who is outside the kingdom.

You see how this works. John is, are they preaching? The John is the herald of the kingdom, but he is not yet in the kingdom. We are heralds of the kingdom, but we are not yet in the kingdom.

The Lord Jesus is going to be the king of his kingdom, but he is not on that throne yet. This is how this is the only way this makes any sense of man born of woman in the present day as Jesus speaks. And for all of the history preceding man born of woman, this goes all the way back to Eve.

Nobody greater. There may be some others as great, but none greater than John the Baptist. But the least, the anchor man, you know, that's the lowest GPA and the lowest professional marks of anybody who graduates from a service Academy graduates from the Naval Academy.

They call him the anchor man. He's as low as you can get and still pass, still get your diploma and still get your commission. He's the anchor man.

He's last in the list. The anchor man in the kingdom, the sheep that the Lord hesitated with the rod over his head and finally said, okay, you can go in the least in the kingdom is greater than the greatest man in history. Who is not yet in the kingdom outside the kingdom least in the kingdom, greater than the greatest man.

Whoever was none greater, at least outside the kingdom, probably many others as great, but none greater. So we have to understand the kingdom. If we're going to understand the kingdom parables, because the kingdom just becomes a mishmash and in a hopeless hash, if we don't take scripture rightly.

So this is our context. Now pay attention here from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.

And let me ask you by way of review, is this a good thing? Is it good that there is force being used to try to take the kingdom good or bad? What is the means of entering the kingdom? Go back further in context, Matthew chapter five, the attitudes who possesses

the kingdom poor in spirit, the humble go back to your beatitudes. How do you, who is it of whom it is said theirs is the kingdom of heaven flip back. If you're going to understand the Pearl parables, this is essential information.

Verse three, Matthew five blessed are the poor in spirit. How many poor in spirit people are violent? It's hubris that makes people violent who climbed through the windows of the Capitol building on January the sixth poor in spirit people. No, just the opposite.

Violence comes from pride. Violence comes from strong motivation. I'm talking about bad violence.

There is a time blessed be the Lord who teaches my hands to war and my fingers to fight. Uh, the armies of Israel under David, we're doing a good thing. The armies under Joshua, we're doing a good thing.

That's not the kind of violence we're talking about here. This is not violence in the interest of a godly cause. Uh, some people like to think that their personal violence is, but that's their problem.

The poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom. They possess the kingdom. They are going to be in the kingdom anywhere from least to greatest, but they're in, it belongs to them.

Look at verse 10. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom. They are the persecuted.

They are the victims of violence. They're not the perpetrators of violence, right? Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are the ones who are going to be filled. Those who are meek will inherit the earth.

Verse five, inheriting the earth. This is the earthly kingdom. It doesn't say they're going to inherit heaven.

They're going to inherit the earth because the kingdom that is coming is an earthly kingdom. The millennial kingdom is earthly kingdom of the father is heavenly. So with all of this as background, now the nonviolent are going to be given the kingdom.

They don't take it by force. Jacob wrestling with the man until dawn, I will not let you go until you bless me. You try to use violence to take the blessing.

You're going to limp for the rest of your life. So back to our parable. Now in Matthew chapter 13, let's look at the first one in verse 44.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid and for joy over it. He goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Let me ask you about every preceding parable.

These kingdom parables in Matthew chapter 13, was it all good? Kingdom of heaven is like the sower that went forth to sow and the seed hit good soil and it came up some hundred, some 60, some 30. Is that the whole parable? Most of that parable is about it not being as good as it could have been, right? Choked by thorns, carried away by birds, shallow roots. Wilson dies in the sun.

How about the next parable? The parable of the wheat and the tares all good. Lord, you sowed good seed and look at that crop. It's waving like golden wheat.

Looks like the homepage for gtbc.org. Don't you love, I love that wheat. That there's a reason why that picture is on our homepage, that wheat in the field ripe for harvest. That's what we want to be.

I don't see any weeds in that picture, but wheat and the tares, it's not all good, is it? How about the parable of the mustard seed? Tiny seed turns into a big tree, but what's the problem? Now you got birds of the air. These are the same birds that came and carried away the seed in the first parable, right? They're doing biological functions up there in the tree, right? The birds of the air birds are almost never a good thing in scripture. If they're not an Eagle mounting up with its wings, if they're not an Eagle as a face on one of the cherubim, birds are the evil world being pressed into service to feed Elijah, for example, but birds picking away at the sacrifice that Abraham was obediently bringing before God so that God would walk between the pieces and cement and seal that covenant with Abram.

Abram was waving away the birds all day long and then night falls and it's dark and there's horror and great darkness and this smoking lamp and it's a very sober thing. Well, leaven, leaven in the lump spreads all through a thing over time and leaven is universally a picture of not so good things. It's kind of like that which withers.

When is withering ever a good thing in scripture? Is the fig tree withering? Is that ever good? Is the seed that grows up with shallow roots withering? Is that a good thing? Withering is never good. Leaven is never good. Beware the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, Jesus told his disciples.

So each one of these preceding parables has had an element in it that tells us not only something good, but something not so good, right? Why wouldn't we expect that in the treasure and pearl parable? I call them the pearl parables because it's just convenient. The treasure could have been a pearl. But uh, when you get to verse 44, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid and for joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field.

Now, another clue we observed in the first session, what's the difference in the man here who purchases this field and the merchant? Think about this deal for the field. And I'm telling you right now, this parable is not showing us something good about the kingdom.

To be plain, we just reviewed people who are trying to take the kingdom by force and he doesn't just say trying to take it.

He says they take it by force. They lay hold of it by force, not by being poor in spirit, not by enduring and being faithful under adverse circumstances. They're trying to take it by force in the days of John the Baptist.

Well, here this man finds a treasure in a field that does not belong to him. To whom does the treasure belong? We all know enough legal truth. If I go out here in the pasture of my neighbor South and I find a horde of gold coins, somebody put in there back in the 1800s, who belongs to those coins? To whom do the coins belong? They belong to John, neighbor to the South.

They're not my coins. But if I'm chasing my dog because it got out and trying to bring it back and I stumble across these coins, what's the right thing to do? What would you want someone to do if they stumbled onto your property and found something buried in land that you own? What would the right proper godly Christian thing be? And he went and found the owner and said, Lord, you have a great treasure in your field. Oh, thank you for telling me.

Let me share some of that with you. Here is your finder's fee. Here is my expression of gratitude.

That's not what this man does. I'm telling you right now, this guy is a rascal. He is on somebody else's property.

He finds a treasure and what does he do? He looks around to make sure nobody's looking and he re-buries it. He can't carry it away. He'll be seen as a thief, right? So this man re-buries the treasure, tells no one, goes to the owner of the field and says, Hey, you've got a field here and it's worth, uh, it's worth 200 denarii.

It's not a very big field. I'll give you 200 denarii for this field. That's what this, that's what this field is worth.

Not particularly good growing land, whatever it may be. I'll give you fair market value for your field. The guy has sold all he has to buy the field.

Why? Because as soon as he buys it, now by illicit means he has gained a treasure that really wasn't his. And all he has to do is take the treasure out, sell some of that and he's got more assets. He's got a minimal investment in the field.

The treasure makes it worth far more, but he hasn't told anybody. He's a rascal and he has obtained this treasure by illicit means. He is trying to take the kingdom of heaven by force.

This is a form of commercial violence. This is wrongdoing. He's basically stealing this treasure by only paying for the field and not paying for the treasure.

He hasn't paid anything for the treasure. He's only bought the field. He's the only one that knows the treasure is buried there.

So he's trying to get the treasure for free. He's got no investment in the treasure. He bought the field, but he's going to make that money right back because now he's, he's made himself a big profit for himself at the expense of the previous owner of the field.

He's a bad guy. So what do we know about this man? Does he represent the Lord Jesus? No. I've, you could imagine, well, he's buying the field of Israel and planted in the middle of it.

The church is not Israel. The church is not buried inside Israel. You don't get the church as a bonus when you redeem Israel.

No, this guy's a rascal and there's no way to get around it. It is unethical and immoral to cheat somebody out of a treasure just because they didn't know it was there. This has been going on from time immemorial.

Somebody does a, does an assay or a survey and finds out that there's something really valuable on a piece of property. They go and buy the property on the cheap without telling the owner, Hey, you know, you're sitting on gold here. You're sitting on oil here.

You're sitting on natural gas or whatever. Oh no. You know, you've got this unapproved land.

Look at all these scrub oaks and it's rocky. You can't grow anything. You can't run stock on it.

But look, it adjoins my land. I'll buy it from you and take it off your hands. It's just a convenience for me.

Maybe I'm going to put a road through for access. So I'll give you a, you know, a few dollars an acre for this. That's wrong.

It's unfair. That's what this first guy does. And there is an element of badness in each of the preceding parables and there's an element of bad list badness in this set.

When Jesus says again, like the mustard seed again, like the tears again, like the birds again, like the rocky soil and again, like the thorns that choke the word and render it unfruitful. Well, here is someone who sees some value in something associated with the kingdom and they are using illicit means to cheat others, to enrich themselves. That's what this guy does.

He cheats the field owner to enrich himself. There's no way around it. He re buries the treasure and he only pays for the field.

He gets the treasure for free contrast that with the merchant and we'll, we'll get to the application of that here in a moment. I think you can already begin to see what is going well, let's just talk about application right now. What is going on in the church today? How many resources are being sold to do kingdom work, to accomplish God's purpose toward which you are driven to join God in his work and experience him by going in and, you know, picking shovel and elbows and knees on the, on the work of God, we're doing God's work.

There is a lot of self-centeredness in these approaches. There is a lot of gain, both personal and corporate in these approaches. There is a condemnation for those who make merchandise of the word of God.

Just find your concordance and look up merchandise. I can't give you the reference off the top of my head, but those who make merchandise of the word of God are in trouble. The truth of God is available.

It is near. It is in our hearts. It is on our lips.

God, the Holy Spirit makes it available and you don't have to put a quarter in the machine to get it. Covering costs to keep something functional and operating is a different thing, but voluntary gifts in the interest of, uh, furthering, uh, the gospel, both of salvation and of living salvation and, and future salvation. That's a different thing.

But when you commercialize the word of God, when you run it like a business, when you've got a profit and loss statement, when you've got, uh, stock and inventory and resupply, just bury the, you know, why is it you have to pay to get this information? Well, you know, I buried, I reburied it in the field. You'll, you'll see it when I choose to give it to you after I've purchased it and I can make money off of it. So that sounds a bit harsh and I, I'm not trying to be specific here, not too specific, but you get the drift.

The Pharisees ran religion in Israel for their own gain. Was there truth of God taught in the synagogues? Did somebody open the scroll and read Isaiah and read Ezekiel and, and did people come to the temple who were godly? Were there some good things happening at the temple? Anna was down there. Simeon was down there.

The Lord went there many, many times. It's not all bad, but what's the, what's the structure doing? How much do you have to ignore and get past to get at the good stuff? Most churches have some Bible teaching. Most ministries have some Bible truth and, and some of it's really good truth.

But Jesus said, there's a lot of people, they're getting the kingdom, but they're taking it in their own efforts and largely for their own gain and their own purpose. Why would a

violent man try to take the kingdom by force? He doesn't want to do it the right way. He wants to do it his way.

He's interested in it, but there's, there's something in it for him. This guy is interested in the treasure, but he buries it in the field because he wants it for himself and he doesn't want to pay for it. Contrast that with the merchant kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, seeking beautiful pearls.

Notice the adjective is not valuable pearls. It is beautiful pearls. He is looking for them for their beauty, not for their profitability.

He's looking for cheap pearls. He can mark up and resell. No, he's looking for beautiful pearls.

He is a connoisseur of beauty. And when he finds this one pearl that is of great price, in order to possess this beauty, it's going to cost him a lot. And he's willing to pay that price because he wants that beauty.

That's what he's been looking for. He has found it and he pays the price. He's not going to resell this pearl.

He's not going to make merchandise of this pearl and he's paying everything he has for the pearl. He doesn't cheat. Whoever found that pearl first and has made it available, but he's looking for beauty.

And when he finds it, he gives everything he has so that he can possess it. It is on the up and up. It has a great price.

He doesn't chisel the guy. He doesn't mark it down. He doesn't steal the pearl.

The owner of that pearl gets full price from this guy because he must have it. It's completely legitimate and it is a full expression of how much this merchant appreciates the beauty of that pearl. I will give everything I have.

This pearl is like no other. What a difference. I don't see these parables as comparable.

We talked about all the similarities at the beginning, but the two men could not be more different. One is a chiseler looking to make a quick profit for himself and cheat the owner of the field. The other is a connoisseur of beauty.

And when he finds it, he's all in. That's how we should be. The word of God reveals the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, the beauty of God, the father and his plan and his purpose, the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, all of the great things that comprise our hope and our future, our eternal life, not just in its duration but in its quality.

Enter into life doesn't just mean you don't go to the lake of fire. Entering into life,

possessing life, being a part of an integral and functional and useful part of that future kingdom ought to be everything to us. Lay aside every weight, lay aside the sin that so easily besets us and run with patience.

The race that is set before us, looking into Jesus, the alpha and the Omega, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is now seated at the right hand of the father, waiting until his enemies are made his footstool when he will be king and we will be with him. If we are qualified, if we love him, if we love one another, that's our destination. That's the pearl and we should be all in the Lord.

Jesus, when he looked at that peril was all in the beauty of fulfilling the father's will and purpose, the beauty of righteousness, the beauty of peace and sanctification, the beauty of relationship with God. The Lord Jesus is our example and he was all in for that, not for himself, for his father and for us. We should be all in, not for ourselves, but for the father and for our fellow believers following in the example set by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that's my understanding of these two parables and the danger of being the man who finds something. And while I'm going to eat this out a little at a time, you'll, you'll wonder where I got this mysterious treasure. But that first guy is in it for the unholy Trinity of me, myself, and I, there is a beauty in the genuine Trinity that should be our goal.

The substance of our thought and reflection and a part of every decision we make that reflects our goals and our values and our priorities. Let's close here in a word of prayer. When we come next time, we're going to look at this fascinating parable of the drag net.

And we've, we've seen nets and fish more than once in scripture. And that's, that's going to helpfully inform our investigations next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for how clearly and beautifully your word reveals the truth that is necessary to sustain our souls, to nourish us and build us up on our faith, to build us up on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other foundation can no man lay. And we pray that as we look to him and we look to his words in this passage, that your Holy spirit will impress them on our hearts, give us discernment, help us to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, that those who look at us will see your work in our lives and give glory to you. We pray these things in Jesus name.

Amen.