

Week of February 13 - 19

The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15)

That same day, Jesus went back to the lake and got into a boat, sat down, and began to teach the crowd lined up on the shore.

“A farmer went out to plant a crop, and as he disbursed his seeds, some fell along the road where they were trampled, or birds snatched them up. Some landed on stony ground where there was little soil. They sprouted quickly but wilted in the heat because they had shallow roots and too little moisture. Some fell into weeds that choked them out before they were established. But a few found good ground and grew and developed and produced a lot of fruit; some thirty times, some sixty times, some even a hundred times what had been planted.”

After Jesus dismissed the crowd, he went home, and his disciples asked him to explain his story.

Jesus said, “It’s important you get the point of the story. Outsiders can’t comprehend the dominion of God. Whoever does understand will gain a deeper grasp and have more wisdom. But anyone who doesn’t understand will lose touch with what he thinks he already knows. I use illustrations because some people don’t see what is obvious or understand what they are told. If they could only see and understand, their sins could be forgiven.

“Isaiah prophesied about those who don’t see or understand. Their hearts are calloused, their ears hard of hearing, and they have closed minds. If they would open their eyes and unstop their ears and soften their hearts and change, I could restore them.

“But you are blessed because you see and understand. Many prophets and godly men have desired to see what you are seeing and hear what you hear but didn’t get the chance.

“Here’s what I mean by this story: The farmer planted the gospel. The seed that fell on the road represents people who are receptive to the good news but never come to life and grow because other people step on it or the devil snatches it away. The seed that landed on stony ground refers to people who receive the gospel and take it in, but it never roots. So, they are lost in the heat of trial or persecution. The seed that landed in the weeds is like people who hear and accept the gospel but get caught up in the pursuits and distractions of the world and get choked out before they get established and bear fruit. But the seed that fell on the good ground are those who hear the gospel and understand it and take it to heart to obey it. They bear spiritual fruit that exceeds what has been invested in them by others.”

A Lamp Under a Basket (Mark 4:21-25; Luke 8:16-18)

“People don’t get a candle and put it under a basket or a bed but on a stand to give light to those who come into the room. Nothing is hidden from them that isn’t revealed, and nothing is private that won’t be made public. Listen! The way you respond and behave will come back on you. More is expected of those who understand. Handle what you have, and more will be given to you. Mishandle what you have, and you’ll lose what you have.

The Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)

The kingdom is like a man who scatters seeds in his field, and while he goes on with his life, sleeping every night and getting up each day, the seed sprouts and grows but he doesn’t know

how it happens. The earth produces the fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the corn in the ear. At the right time, the fruit matures, and he picks it.”

The Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

“The kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while he slept, his enemy planted weeds in with his wheat. When the wheat started sprouting the weeds came up with it. His helpers asked the owner why there were weeds in the field since he planted good seed. As he explained that an enemy had done it, his helpers offered to pull the weeds. ‘No,’ the owner said, ‘Some of the wheat may get pulled out, too. Let the weeds grow with the wheat until harvest time. Then pull the weeds and throw them into the furnace and put the wheat in my barn.’”

The disciples asked for an explanation. “I am the sower, and the field is the world, and the good seed are those people who are planted in my kingdom. The weeds are those under the influence of the devil, who planted the weeds. The harvest is at the end of the world and the reapers are angels who will gather everything offensive and those who practice offensive behavior and throw them into a burning furnace. Many will be screaming and gnashing their teeth, but the righteous will stand out like the sun in their Father’s Kingdom. Do you understand?”

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven (Matthew 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32)

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that someone plants. It is one of the smallest of seeds, but when it grows, it is one of the largest plants that grows so big that birds can nest in its branches.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven that a woman kneads into dough, using only three spoonfuls to permeate the whole loaf.

More Parables about the Kingdom (Matthew 13:45-53)

“The kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure buried in a field that a man discovers. He gladly sells everything he owns to purchase that field.

“It is like a jeweler looking for expensive pearls and finding one, sells everything he owns to purchase it.

“It can be compared to a net cast into the sea that catches all kinds of fish. When it is pulled ashore, the fishermen sort the good fish into barrels and throw the bad ones away. That’s how it will be at the end of the world. Angels will come and separate the wicked from the just and throw them into a burning furnace. They will be crying and gnashing their teeth.

“Do you understand what I am saying?” “Yes,” they replied. “Then,” Jesus replied, “every student of the Bible is like someone who goes into his closet and finds rich treasures that he never noticed before.”

Prophecy and Parables (Matthew 13:34-35; Mark 4:33-34)

Jesus used illustrations to make his message clear to the crowds, using an illustration for virtually everything He said. Then when they were alone, he often explained the illustrations to his disciples, fulfilling what the prophets said about using illustrations to reveal mysteries that had been preserved from the foundation of the world.

Jesus Calms a Storm (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:23-25)

As Jesus sat in a boat with his disciples at the end of a long day, he suggested they sail across the lake. Even though He told the crowd to go home, some of them got into smaller boats and tried to keep up as long as they could. When Jesus went to sleep in the back of the boat, a strong storm arose, and waves swept across the deck, filling the boat with water. Awakening Jesus, the disciples exclaimed, "Get up and help us. We're all going to drown!"

Rising, he rebuked the wind and told the sea to calm down. Immediately, everything settled down. "What are you worried about?" he asked. "Where is your faith?" And they all marveled at the man who commanded the wind and the sea.

Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:26-39)

When they came ashore at the land of the Gadarenes, a man possessed by unclean spirits met them. Crazy for many years, he ran through the mountains naked, screaming and yelling all day and night, cutting himself with sharp stones and assaulting people who passed by the graveyard. He had been captured and bound before, but was so strong ropes could not hold him. Seeing Jesus approaching, the man ran toward him, shouting, "What are you doing here, Jesus, Son of God? Please don't torture me yet!"

Jesus asked the demon what his name was, and he said, "Legion, for we are many." When Jesus told the demon to come out, he pleaded with Jesus not to banish him from this world into the abyss. So, Jesus directed the demons out of the man into a large herd of hogs that were feeding in the distance. All at once, the hogs ran violently down the steep slope into the lake and drowned.

When the hog keepers realized what had happened, they ran into town and told everyone. The whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw the lunatic cleaned up and dressed at Jesus' feet behaving himself, they were terrified and asked Jesus to leave the area at once.

The man wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to go home and tell his family and friends what great things God had done for him and what compassion the Lord had shown. So, he went back to Decapolis and shared his encounter to everyone's amazement.

A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed (Matthew 9:18-22; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-48)

When Jesus returned, he discovered a crowd waiting for him. Jairus, a prominent citizen whose 12-year old daughter had contracted a deadly disease, pleaded with Jesus, "Come put your hand on her so she won't die!" Jesus followed him home as a crowd pressed toward him from every direction.

A woman who suffered from a bleeding disorder for 12 years had spent her lifesavings on doctors, but had only grown worse. She came up behind him, convinced if she could touch him, she would be healed. When she grabbed his garment, she knew immediately she was healed. Jesus turned and demanded to know who touched him because he sensed that power had gone out of him. His followers remarked, "Look at this crowd. We all touched you." Knowing that she was the woman who touched him, she admitted it was her, and told him why.

"Be of good comfort. Your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be well," Jesus told her.

One of Jairus' servants soon arrived and said, "Your daughter is dead. There's no need to further trouble the Master." Jesus told him not to worry. "Have faith, and she will live."

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him, and when they arrived at Jairus' home, everyone was crying. "Why are you crying?" Jesus asked. "The girl isn't dead, but just sleeping. Everyone needs to get out except her parents." They laughed and scornfully mocked him because it was obvious that she was dead. When everyone except her parents and disciples was present, Jesus took her by the hand and said, "Get up, young lady!" She immediately got out of bed and walked to the table to eat, astonishing everyone. The report of what happened there spread quickly.

The Blind and Dumb Healed (Matthew 9:27-34)

As Jesus stepped outside, two blind beggars approached, crying, "Son of David, show us mercy." Jesus took them inside and asked them if they believed he could heal them. They both said yes emphatically, so he touched their eyes and all at once they could see. He told them to keep it to themselves, but they couldn't help but tell everyone in town about it.

As they were leaving, Jesus met some people who brought a man who couldn't speak. When Jesus expelled his demon, he began to talk, and people marveled, saying, "No one in Israel has ever seen anything like this." But the Pharisees kept insisting that Jesus was employing wicked spells to cast out the spirits.

The Cost of Following Jesus (Matthew 8:18-22; Luke 9:57-62)

As they traveled on, they attracted a large crowd and Jesus told his disciples to sail across the lake. A scribe approached and said he would be willing to follow him anywhere. "Foxes have their dens and birds have their nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head," Jesus said.

Jesus invited someone else to come along, but the man said he needed to care for his dying father first. "Come with me to proclaim the kingdom and let those who are more worldly concentrate on worldly issues," Jesus suggested. When he invited yet another, he said first he wanted to go home and say good-bye to his parents and his friends. "No one who commits to follow me can keep up while he is looking back over his shoulder," Jesus told him.