

OK... I confess... I am an addict! ... My family has been noticing for years and seeking my reform. ... My addiction is that I am a news-junkie. I watch a lot of news when I am home. ... It intrigues me. I am mesmerized by the events that are shaping our world – because society is changing so fast. We are not the same society we were one year ago... or even six months ago.

Because of Sunday evening's mass-murder in Las Vegas... during the Route 91 Harvest Festival... all of our lives... in many ways will forever be affected. Society is already making changes in response to it.

The society-changing events that you and I are (daily) watching on television and discussing on social media (like Facebook)... are absolutely frightening... aren't they...? ... Identity theft is now so widespread... that experts are saying – “It is no longer a matter of **IF** you will have your identity stolen in your lifetime – it is **when** and **how often**? ... Equifax... one of the three largest credit agencies in the U.S. ... discovered in July that it suffered a breach... that may affect **143 million** consumers. ... Due to the sensitivity of data stolen — including Social Security numbers and driver's license numbers — this is being called one of the **worst** breaches ever. Hackers had gained access to the company's system from mid-May through July. ... Meanwhile... millions more Americans who have shopped at stores like Target and Kmart... and Whole Foods Market... have to worry about their identities being stolen and their bank accounts being drained. And if you have eaten at Sonic Burger lately... or Chipolte... or Arby's... you may have reason to be concerned... as well. ... Perhaps Verizon is your cell phone service provider. (You have need to be concerned.)

Life is changing so fast. Our world seems so unstable and becoming more so everyday! A crazy North Korean Dictator is very close to developing a nuclear bomb and the capability of delivering to our shores. ... Iran... races closer to this goal... as well.

ANTIFA... .. Folks... have you had any chance to look into who these street thugs are?... They wear black ski masks and bandannas to cover their faces... as they exert extreme violence... attempting to usher-in a totalitarian Marxist government here in the U.S. (But not just America. They have been active in Europe for years... creating all sorts of mayhem and violence. Their coming here is relatively new... and they are very vocal about who they are and what their goals are. They have no problem clearly announcing that they are Anarchist Communists... who want to bring down our free society. Boston... New York... Washington DC... Charlottesville VA... Portland Oregon... Oakland California... San Francisco... and Berkley... In each of these cities they have caused major riots. ... In Portland they own several buildings (if I remember right... three) on one city block. They use them for training. This is not just college kids who want to exercise freedom of speech. This is a... well-organized... well-funded... world-wide... socialist movement... that is training and using young people across our nation... to create enough chaos and bloodshed in our street... that people will lose faith in our government. Chaos is the friend of the Marxist. Throughout history it has always been this way.

As I watch the news... I see that History is repeating itself.

Is our world falling apart before our very eyes...?

Today everything is marked by seeming failure. You must be living in a cave... if you cannot see that God's purposes are opposed at every turn. Instead of visibly triumphing... God (and His Kingdom purposes) are continuously resisted. Truth is ever on the rickety scaffold and wrong is ever on the throne.

Where is the hope... for a news-junkie... like me...? ... Well... I found some (in fact... quite a lot) in our passage of study for today. i... We are about to see that... in spite of outward appearances... God's purposes are prospering. ... His goals are being attained.

For many people... our passage (Matthew 13)... is a confusing and perplexing chapter. Parables about sowing seeds and nets drawing fish to the shore can leave us scratching our heads. However, this chapter contains several keys to understanding our lives and the place where we find ourselves in history. ...They show us how much God really is in control... and they help us follow Jesus... without being shaken by current events.

Ten chapters prior to our passage... John was baptizing Jesus ... and the Kingdom of God looked very imminent. "The kingdom of God was at hand" – John forcefully proclaimed... and Jesus affirmed it was true. ... But here we are... ten chapters later... and very little substantive change has happened. ... Sure, Jesus has healed and taught some people... but the Religious leaders were standing up - against Him... even plotting to kill Him (Matt 12:14). ... A lot of people very confused about whether Jesus really was the Messiah... including John the Baptist himself (we saw in chap. 11). Even the disciples must have been a little perplexed, as things weren't

shaping up the way they had hoped. Certainly... it didn't look like He was ushering in a whole new kingdom.

So what did Jesus do? ... He decided to tell them some stories about farmers... seeds... weeds... bread... pearls... and homeowners. ... How's that for a message from the Messiah! ... Matthew has just stressed in the previous chapter... (before this one)... that Jesus was **rejected** by the national leaders. Israel's official response to Him and the kingdom He offered was "*No! Now get out of here!*" ... We saw last week that Jesus accepted their refusal. He withdrew the offer of His Kingdom - for now. ... And then today... we see Him launch into a bunch of "folksy stories." ...
... *Jesus! What are You doing...?*

ANSWER: He is satisfying a very important question that His disciples would have on their minds... at that very moment.

After pronouncing the postponement of the Kingdom... He answered the question: What... is now the status of the Kingdom...? What will it now look like...? ... "*OK...Jesus... it is apparent that You will not establish the Kingdom just yet... so what happens - from this point forward? ... Lord... we left everything to follow You... and now You say the kingdom is NOT about to happen...?*"

So Jesus gives them the answers that their minds would have been craving! Jesus lays out for them what the shape of the Kingdom will now be... moving forward... He takes them from there... to the time... when it will be fully realized... at His second coming. These stories give a very

accurate picture of the state of the Kingdom of God... from that time... through our period of time today. ... He does it... by telling them parables.

"Why do we have parables?" In other words, why not just state the main point instead of telling a story? This is exactly the question that the disciples ask Jesus in verse 10... of Matthew 13...

Matthew 13:10-12

Jesus points to two purposes for parables... and these purposes are different... based on two different kinds of audiences.

First... Jesus was only revealing truth... to those **who were believing**... (His disciples.) For His disciples... the secrets of the kingdom of heaven had been given. THEY were the ones who needed it. Their world seemed to be falling apart. ... They had left everything to follow Jesus... only to see the Kingdom delayed. They needed these truths – and so do we. ... WE can see that God is completely in charge today! Yours and my world has the stability of God's sovereign control. Things are happening – just as He said they would.

The second purpose for the parables... concerns those who were rejecting Christ... those who were refusing to see Him as the Messiah. Jesus was **concealing truth** from those who were denying the obvious.

In spite of miracle after miracle... teaching after teaching... the crowds and religious leaders refused to believe in Jesus as the Christ. Jesus said that "to them it has not been given" to understand these stories. This was part

of their punishment... According to verse 12... even the understanding they did have... would be taken away.

Then... in order to be super clear... Jesus added...

Matthew 13:13-15

This prophecy... given to Isaiah at the time of his call... sealed the doom of the northern kingdom of Israel. Soon thereafter that nation was handed over to the Assyrians for dismemberment and deportation. Jesus – quoting Isaiah here - formally handed the Jews over to an even more **painful** dispersion. (This time... they would be spread over the earth for the next 2,000 years!)

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were just like the leaders of Isaiah's day. They had closed their eyes and their ears. They made the decision to reject the evidence – otherwise they would have turned and the Lord would have healed them. Even though many had the person of Christ and the words of Christ right in front of them... they were rebelling against Him. ...So whatever understanding they might have had... or might pick-up on in the future... was removed from them... as part of their judgment.

If a man wants to know the Word of God... he can know it. He who wants to know the truth can know it. But you can shut your ears to it. There are multitudes of so-called broadminded people who shut their ears to the Word of God.

If you know a little truth and you want to know more, the Lord will add to it. If you don't want to know the truth, the Lord will see to it that you won't get

it. You see, the Lord will never shut the door to one who wants to hear. He makes it very clear that this is His reason for speaking in parables. Those who don't want to hear will not understand them.

Matthew 13:16-17

Many Old Testament saints and seers had longed to see the Messianic era. The disciples were living in a thrilling time: a time when prophecy was being fulfilled, a time when the Christ had come, a time of divine visitation unparalleled in history. Our time is equally exciting, for all around us are obvious preparations for the coming again of the Lord from glory.

Here is main idea of all the parables we are about to study (I pray that you have open ears): The new shape of this postponed kingdom... will... despite being unrecognized and rejected by the masses... ***is already accomplishing*** its purpose in the world... and it will one day be gloriously consummated... resulting in eternal judgment for those who reject the gospel and eternal life for those who genuinely trust in Christ and treasure His reward.

Boy... I am telling you! This is a message that we need to hear today... as we see evil run so rampant everywhere we look. *“God! Where are You?!”* So... Let's get started... (We will start with these parables this week... and then come back to them next week...)

Matthew 13:1-2

The same day that the Lord was formally ***rejected*** by the Jews, He went down to the seashore and addressed the multitudes who still gathered

around Him. ... The moment the Lord opened His mouth... it was evident that the character of His teaching was changed. ... He spoke about the kingdom... but it was no longer "*at hand*." ... And Jesus (now teaching in parables)... conceals truth from many... and reveals truth to the few. ... Blindness is now Israel's future.

Matthew 13:3

The first of these Kingdom parables emphasizes how the kingdom will go forth... and spread. ... "*It is delayed... but it **will** move forward! Here is **how** it will do that...*"

Gratefully... we have Jesus' explanation for this parable in verses 18-23... so we don't have to wonder what point He's trying to get across. ... So we will read the story in verses 4-9... and then we will drop down to study verses 18-23... where Jesus interprets it for us.

Matthew 13:4-9

Warren Wiersbe writes:

It is shocking to realize that three fourths of the seed did not bear fruit. Jesus did not describe an age of great harvest, but one in which the Word would be rejected. He was not impressed with the "great multitudes" that followed Him, for He knew that most of the people would not receive His Word within and bear fruit.

The Kingdom will move forward... but the majority will still reject it. It will only grow in one type of soil.

Now as we turn to Jesus' explanation... we will see that the seed... is the Word of God. **That** is the best kind of seed in the world; we can sow nothing better than the inspired, infallible, inerrant, inimitable Word of God. It is infinitely superior to the philosophies and theories of man. Like any other seed... the Word of God has life.

A seed is imprinted with a genetic code... and once the seed is sown... that imprinted law of life goes to work. The Word of God is the same. It carries within it the genetic code of eternal life and when it is planted in the right kind of soil... it germinates... it produces life... and the Kingdom of God advances!

Matthew 13:18-19

The wayside soil apparently represents church members, professing Christians. They heard the Word of God... but the Word was not mixed with faith -- or if it was... it was a formal... intellectual faith which simply nodded the head. In other words, to folks like this... Christianity is a sideline. Belonging to the church is like belonging to a lodge or a club.

Some people listen to the good news of the gospel, but what they hear makes no impression on their souls. The words go in one ear and out the other. It is hard to say what such people think of as they sit in church and are exposed to the most magnificent truths ever expounded. We only know that they get up and walk away. They might as well have been watching a football game or standing at the kitchen sink or closing a business deal.

And then... before these people (who receive the Word superficially) have gotten up from their church seats... and taken a dozen steps... Satan has snatched away the seed. The message is dismissed from their minds as soon as they hear a joke, a piece of gossip, the latest football score, or a crying baby. An invitation to lunch or a chance to talk about business comes, and the Word is completely gone, just as if it had never been heard.

Matthew 13:20-21

Some soil that receives the Word... is a shallow soil... that has... just beneath the surface... a bunch of rocks. Seed dropped in the shallow soil gives initial promise... but since no roots can penetrate the rocky layer... and since no moisture can be retained in the soil... the seed has no chance to develop completely. The sun comes out, the soil and the seed are scorched... and the early promise withers away.

You've seen them... and I've seen them. We are familiar with people who are stirred... enthusiastic... and overjoyed by a message and make immediate professions of faith. There is an initial response. Everything is bright with promise. But then hard times come... (as soon as these shallow people discover what it is going to cost to maintain a testimony for Christ)... they give up.

J. Vernon McGee calls them "*Alka-Seltzer Christians.*" There is a lot of fizz in them. They make as much fuss during a service as a rocket on a launching pad... but they never get into orbit.

Mathhew 13:22

"The cares of this world" refers to the problems of life. When a person becomes a Christian, he is not given blanket protection against common disasters. The homes of believers are just as subject to tornadoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes as the homes of unbelievers. Problems knock at the doors of both pagans and believers. ... But Christians... of course... have advantages. We have a mighty Savior... Who walks with us through every storm. ... We have the Lord Jesus as our Great High Priest... and He is able to minister to us when problems come... and He makes "all things work together for good" for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). ... Shallow believers don't have this. They think God has let them down... and that there's nothing to Christianity after all.

The second kind of thorn, "the deceitfulness of riches," refers to the prosperities of life. Wealth can be as much a snare as poverty. Many people have seemed to say yes to Christ, only to lose sight of spiritual things when worldly advancement beckons. Perhaps a promised promotion at work cuts right across a dawning conviction that one should become a missionary. Or business booms - at the cost of neglecting Scripture's truth and principles. When prosperity arrives, it brings the entanglements of luxury and ease. The gospel seed can be choked out by success.

Matthew 13:23

These are the hearers who receive the Word and understand it. Some of them don't bring forth much fruit -- only thirtyfold... and others bring forth a hundredfold!

In the parable of the sower... we see God's present rulership over the entire earth as He calls out a people to His name. ... Yes the masses stand against God and His precious Kingdom message. But God is carrying out His program today... through His church... composed of every true believer.

Matthew 13:24

The parable of the weeds (or the tares)... and the remaining parables are introduced by the words "another parable." ... The word translated "another" is *allos*, which means "another of the same kind." The indication is that they are the same kind as the parable of the sower. Jesus is not teaching about anything else but what the Kingdom will look like from here on out. ... In the parable of the sower the Lord taught that the gospel is not going to convert the world in this age. ... From the human standpoint... the success of the gospel appears to be limited... for even where God's Word does take root... more often than not... it produces only partial fruit. ... Now... in the next three parables... introduced by "another"... the Lord taught that God's work in the world... will be... opposed... hindered... and it will be countered with tireless persistence.

The next parable revolves around *the sowing* of both good and bad seed. In this story... the bad seed was sown by a malicious and unscrupulous enemy... under cover of darkness. ... During *the growing* of the seed it became obvious that all was not well with the field. ... A weed... in its early stages similar in appearance to the wheat... was growing alongside the wheat.

Matthew 13:25-32

Jesus tells two other parables... and then... later... when He is alone with His disciples... they asked Him what the meaning was of the Parable we just read. ... We will get back to the other two parables... but right now... lets drop down to Jesus' explanation for the Parable of the Weeds in verse 36...

Matthew 13:36-43

In the parable we see Satan's deliberate, stealthy introduction of unregenerate men and women into the Lord's harvest field. Satan sows those who closely resemble true believers in that they profess the faith. However, they are only imitation Christians; they have never been saved. They sing and preach and witness; they are religiously active, but they are strangers to the Holy Spirit. They talk about the Lord, but do not know Him. They are unconverted and lost.

The people He described as weeds are a special class of religious people, deliberately selected by Satan to mingle silently and subtly with the true people of God.

Church history gives us scores of examples of Satan sowing deception alongside every vital working of the Holy Spirit. The Lord sows His people into the world and then Satan comes right behind them and sows his people. They look like the real thing. The counterfeit is so clever that even saved people often cannot distinguish between the true and the false. Satan is a deceiver.

But God's *immediate plan* was to do nothing. How like God... and how **un**like us! The Lord has been exercising patience for more than two thousand years. He waits with the knowledge that once He rises up to deal with this diabolical sowing... He will make an end of it once and for all.

Men in their folly have sought to uproot the weeds... or what they considered to be weeds. That was Rome's policy for centuries. Roman church authorities bruised... crushed... and burned all those she considered unfit for the kingdom of God. This was (also) what the Spanish Inquisition was all about. ... But the Protestant church... as soon as it rose to power... responded the same way! In this dreadful process many a true child of God was broken... tortured... and burned at the stake.

The work of separating the true from the false is not left to us. It is reserved for the angels. It will happen swiftly as our age draws to a close. We have no business damning people to Hell.

Christ saw the Kingdom moving forward... while Satan tries to infiltrate it... and confuse it. ... That is what happened and is happening.

Now let's go back...

Matthew 13:31-33

The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven are a pair. The first deals with the outward development of error in the church. The second deals with the secret and inward development of error.

The mustard grows wild in Israel. In its natural state... it attains considerable height... and becomes a considerable plant... but it does not ever become "a great tree" as we see in the parable.

The mustard in the parable... refused to remain an herb. ... Instead it became a tree. ... Herbs and trees are entirely different. One kind never becomes the other kind. ... The mustard seed in the parable showed a weird growth.

The truths the Lord came to sow... were humble... unpretentious... and simple. His teaching was "the least of all seeds." ... Think of what Jesus taught about His kingdom. ... On one occasion He took a child... set the little one in the midst of the disciples, and said,

Matthew 18:4 (ESV)

Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The church is an herb. The mustard seed... by aspiring to become a tree... denied its own genetic code and sought to raise itself above the level of its kind. ... Similarly... what we have seen... is that the visible church has aspired to become a worldly... hierarchical system — a superpower established around a central authority that delegates its authority by thorough-going organizational means. It has made treaties... formed alliances with kings... hired armies... meddled in the affairs of nations... dabbled in politics... and ruled like a sovereign in the world. That was something the Lord Jesus never planned for His church. He foresaw it... and foretold it in His parable... but He never planned it... and He never sanctioned it.

The mustard that became a tree was something foreign to what its Creator intended... something to which it never could have aspired without some mysterious denial of its nature. That is the mystery of the parable.

In the parable of the sower... the Lord used birds to depict evil spirits... snatching away seed that fell by the wayside. Birds were used in the same sense in the parable of the mustard seed. Since Jesus did not explain this parable... we must use what He did explain in the other parables to find its meaning. The birds in the Parable of the Sower represented Satan. We need to be consistent and follow our Lord's interpretation. ... So the birds (no doubt) represent evil spirits. They symbolize evil spirits and the tree symbolizes the over-grown church. This abnormal growth of the mustard... makes it possible for the birds to lodge in its branches.

We can find evil spirits lurking in all branches of the church as it is represented by Christendom. They hide in the branches of the three primary divisions of the professing church: Protestantism... Greek Orthodoxy... and Catholicism. The evil spirits lurk wherever there is an outward grasping for material structure and power - wherever the church is distorted into something it was never intended to be. We find the evil spirits in new churches... old churches... seemingly sound churches.

The church and the world have become horribly mixed. There has been real integration between man in the church and man in the world. They live and act very much alike in our day.

But the Kingdom still moves forward... We are inside of what the world sees (and calls) "Christendom"... (this enormous... and unnatural tree... this mix of the world and the church.) Christ saw this... He foretold it... His Kingdom program is being played out. He is still in control.

The parable of the leaven is a companion to the parable of the mustard seed. We just saw saw the outward display of the professing church. In the parable of the leaven we see the inward decay of the professing church.

What does the leaven represent? There are those who interpret the leaven (in this parable) as the gospel. ... However... Nowhere in Scripture is leaven used as a principle of good. It is always a principle of evil. The word leaven occurs ninety-eight times in the Bible – (about seventy-five times in the Old Testament and about twenty-three times in the New Testament) -- and it is always used in a bad sense. Symbolism in Scripture does not contradict itself... and we can be certain that leaven is not used in a good sense here. Leaven is not the gospel.

We are to see that there is sin in the church. ... I hope you ladies will forgive me for pointing this out – but wherever we see in Scripture - a woman is used... acting in a religious role... and doctrine is the issue... she is always used as a principle of evil. We see this three times... (most notably in Revelation 12.) Here... she takes the leaven and hides it in the meal. (By the way) If the leaven represents the gospel... why in the world did she hide it? ... Jesus sees the woman clandestinely introduced her corrupting doctrines into the pure meal of Christ's teaching. Then she sat back and watched it go to work. No one protested... People took no notice of what was happening. Besides, the popular thought was that leaven was

a good thing to have in a loaf. Likewise the corrupting doctrines that have subtly taken over Christendom were introduced almost unnoticed ...and many innovative but evil ideas have been popularly accepted as improvements. ... From the very early days of the church, true believers have battled false doctrine and hypocrisy.

I am sorry that I have gone so long this morning... there are three other parables that we will get to next week... which continue to describe (very accurately) what the church looks like today.

Is the world falling apart before our very eyes...? Will the economy collapse...? Will Marxism take over...? Will terrorists destroy our society...?

One thing is we know for sure – things are **not** as unstable as they look. Jesus saw these things happening... and He told us to expect them. God is working His Kingdom plan perfectly.

Are you part of the Kingdom...?

Is your heart the good soil...?