

The Gospel of Matthew
Lesson 9
Matthew 13:16 – Matthew 14:33

Blessed to See

Matthew 13:¹⁶ "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷ "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

The disciples had a fantastic opportunity—they were eyewitnesses of Christ, the Son of God. For many months they had taken Jesus for granted, not really listening to Him or obeying Him. However, they are now beginning to listen to Him. Jesus fulfills many God-inspired predictions in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Peter speaks to this topic of the revelation of Christ that they all are seeing.

1 Peter 1:10-13 As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful search and inquiry, ¹¹seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look. ¹³Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Parable of the Sower Explained

Matthew 13:¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰ "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is *only* temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³ "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

All followers of the Lord have their own specific ministries in sharing the gospel. Our purpose as followers of Christ is to plant the seeds of the Gospel each day. We can never predict or understand how that message will grow, but grow it will, in some form. When the Gospel has grown in the heart to just the right point, the person can be harvested for the Lord. The secret of the growth is in the seed of the Gospel, not in the soil of the hearer. All who hear the Gospel message can experience its growth within them to the point of salvation. The parable of the sower is not about salvation; it is about the acceptance of the Word of God in one's heart. No matter how mature you are in the Lord, there are times when the Word of God falls on your life and because of the circumstances of the time, you may or may not receive the Word fully.

Parable of the Good Seed and Tares

Matthew 13:²⁴ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸ "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹ "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

If the malicious spirit cannot steal the Gospel, he will sow weeds alongside it. In this electronic age we can understand this tactic. When someone wants to smear another's character, all he has to do is post false information on a page in the electronic world and it is there for all time. Even when everything is proven to be false, the lies are still out there attacking the person's character. One day those lies and all those involved in them will be gathered up and sent to the eternal lake of fire, but in the meantime, they continue to grow and choke the growth and blessing of the good seed.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:³¹ He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³² and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

What is the kingdom of heaven like? The Lord gives two examples. The first is the mustard seed thrown into the garden. A mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds known to man, produces a tree big enough that the birds of the air can create a safe home within its branches. Although the kingdom of God begins in our hearts and souls with faith that is smaller than a mustard seed, that kingdom can grow to such magnificent proportions that safely we can provide for a vast multitude in our knowledge concerning the kingdom of the Lord.

Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:³³ He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened." ⁷⁶

Secondly, the kingdom of God has the same overwhelming effects in our lives just as leaven has in bread dough. Once the dough has been kneaded, it is allowed to rest. During this period the dough slowly begins to expand until it is many times its original size. So too, does the kingdom of God expand! Countless souls are being added each day to the kingdom and it is now much larger than it was when it began in 30 AD.

⁷⁶ Genesis 18:6

Jesus Speaks In Parables Only

Matthew 13:³⁴ All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. ³⁵ *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." ⁷⁷

At this point in the Lord's ministry, He uses parables almost exclusively. Drawn from everyday life and nature, the parables have earthly meanings with eternal consequences. As close to the Lord as the disciples are, they still struggle with the true message that the Lord presents. The Lord explains the meaning of each parable privately, not in the crowd of onlookers which includes the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord reveals to the apostles how the parables portray the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

In Peter's Home Jesus Explains the Parable of the Tares

Matthew 13:³⁶ Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." ³⁷ And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

This parable and the parable of the sower contain a universal application. Every congregation has this problem when the Gospel is proclaimed. Four kinds of hearts are found in every congregation. As we read this parable we should say to ourselves, "Is this me?" The parable is about caution! We are to exhibit caution when we share the Word of God. In this case, Jesus is warning the apostles not to expect their hearers to respond to all their teachings. It is also a warning to all ministers of the Gospel not to look for great results from their sermons. It is also a warning to the hearers to take heed as they listen to the preachers. The people need to hear a good preacher, but they also must be good listeners. The first caution is that we must be aware of the devil when we hear the Word. The seed is snatched away from the preachers by the devil as soon as it is sown. The seed or word of God may not sink down into their consciences. It may not make an impression on their minds. The malicious spirit of evil is everywhere, always watching for an occasion to destroy our souls. But nowhere perhaps is this evil so active as in the congregation. People wonder where evil comes from and marvel that they find sermons so dull that they hardly remember them. They are stolen by the malicious spirit.

⁷⁷ Psalm 78:2

Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

The man may have hidden the treasure to prevent its being stolen. In the enormous wealth of the kingdom, whatever the cost may be, it is never too great a price to pay.

Parable of the Pearl of Great Value

Matthew 13:⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, ⁴⁶ and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The kingdom can be found by the one who earnestly seeks it. When the kingdom is found, it is worth purchasing even if we must sell everything we have to obtain it.

Parable of the Dragnet

Matthew 13:⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away.⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

On earth, the kingdom is filled with would-be members who are there to enjoy its earthly benefits. The scribes and Pharisees are in this class of members. However, they will not enjoy the benefit of the true kingdom because they will be gathered and cast into the lake of fire and eternal doom.

Parable of the Household

Matthew 13:⁵¹ "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." ⁵² And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old." ⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.

Every prepared preacher of the Gospel has a treasure of divine knowledge. Because of his preparation, he is able to present the truth. The scribes of the Sanhedrin who have become believers have an advantage because they know the Old Testament; therefore, they have the right to be looked upon as the head of the household. Armed with the old knowledge of the Old Testament and the new knowledge found in the Lord, they are prepared to lead the people of the kingdom for the Lord.

Rejected in Nazareth

Matthew 13:⁵⁴ He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? ⁵⁵ "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things?" ⁵⁷

And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household." ⁵⁸ And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

The people in Nazareth know Jesus well. They have watched Him grow up and have interacted with Him in His carpenter business. Notice that the townspeople mention the family of Jesus by name except Joseph. Most likely, Joseph has died and Mary has continued to live in Nazareth with her sons and daughters.

The English translators perform an injustice when they use the word "offense" in this passage. Every other time they translate it "stumble." The proper translation should be that they "stumble" over Him. The people of Nazareth stumble in their belief, rejecting the idea that He can truly be the Messiah because He is the carpenter who has carved the yokes for their oxen and built their tables and stools. He is an ordinary man. How can He be the Messiah? Where and when did all this power come upon Him? We can assume from this passage that Jesus did nothing out of the ordinary as He was growing up in Nazareth. The assumption can be made that when He left Nazareth just thirty months earlier to go to the Jordan River to be baptized, the people of His hometown thought He was just a normal person. They literally had no idea that He was God in the flesh. Now, this same Jesus is performing miracles that only God can do. How can the Jesus who grew up among them be God?

To answer them, He uses the proverb, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." The saddest part of this proverb is the realization that His family rejects His Messiahship. The rejection by the town's people is understandable; the rejection by His family is disheartening. The Gospel of Mark says the following:

Mark 6: ⁵ And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

It is easy to stumble over verse five and fail to understand that it belongs in context with verse six. The clue to the proper interpretation springs forth in the word "unbelief." Jesus heals only those who believe that He can heal them. He heals only those who put their faith and trust in Him. Jairus came to ask Him to heal his daughter. The woman came to touch His garment. The demon-possessed man fell before Him. They all believed that He was God and could heal them. Belief is the cornerstone of faith. Unbelievers do not place their faith in something they do not believe. Jairus will be in heaven along with the woman healed of the issue of blood. The demon-possessed people who were freed from their captivity will be there also. Only in His hometown, Nazareth, do the people stay away from Jesus and that is because they do not believe that He is God.

Herod's Fear – Recall of John's Death

Matthew 14: ¹ At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the news about Jesus, ² and said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." ³ For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. ⁴ For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵ Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet. ⁶ But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before *them* and

pleased Herod, ⁷ so *much* that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸ Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." ⁹ Although he was grieved, the king commanded *it* to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. ¹⁰ He sent and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹² His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

John the Baptist, who had been dead for about six months at this time, had rebuked Herod for His sinful relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife. It is difficult to determine whom Herod feared the most - John or Herodias. When Herod could get away from Herodias, he amused himself in the dungeon with John. Herod was fearful of John's power even though John never performed a single miracle. Mark's records of the death of John the Baptist is identical to the above passage.

It was Herodias who wanted John the Baptist dead, not Herod. To accomplish this task, she devised a plan that stooped to the lowest degradation of the well-to-do person in that day. On Herod's birthday she convinced her daughter to dance in a lustful and licentious way before all the guests at his party. In that day, professional dancers performed these kinds of dances. The royalty and well-to-do would never have been found in such degrading dress or engaged in such lewd behavior. Herodias stooped low to degrade her daughter to tempt Herod to grant her wish, and he did when he had John the Baptist beheaded.⁷⁸

Feeding of the Five Thousand

Matthew 14:¹³ Now when Jesus heard *about John*, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard *of this*, they followed Him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt compassion for them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away; you give them *something* to eat!" ¹⁷ They said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." ¹⁸ And He said, "Bring them here to Me." ¹⁹ Ordering the people to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed *the food*, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples *gave them* to the crowds, ²⁰ and they all ate and were satisfied. They picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets. ²¹ There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children. ²² Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.

⁷⁸ HEROD PHILIP II was the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He was "tetrarch" of Batanea, Iturea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. He rebuilt the city of Caesarea Philippi, calling it by his own name to distinguish it from the Caesarea on the sea-coast which was the seat of the Roman government. He married Salome, the daughter of Herodias. Note the power of a bad conscience. Herod's guilty conscience was ready to conclude that John was risen from the dead. He desired to see Jesus so why did he not go to see him? He may have thought it below him to seek out Jesus. He may also have not wanted to hear any more reproving of sin. Because he delayed seeing Jesus, his heart was hardened and when he did see Jesus in (Luke 23:11), he was as prejudiced against him as others were. We are told that when Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on ... he was perplexed. He said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" Great and powerful as he was, news of our Lord's ministry brought his sins to mind and disturbed him even in his royal palace. The news of another preacher of righteousness filled him with alarm. The recollection of his own wickedness in killing John the Baptist flashed into his mind. He knew that he had done wrong. He felt guilty, and self-condemned. Herod's sin had found him out. Conscience is a most powerful part of our natural constitution. It cannot save our souls. It never leads a person to Christ. It is often blind, ignorant, and misdirected. Yet conscience often testifies against sin in the sinner's heart and makes him realize that it is wrong to reject God. Happy are those who have found the only cure for a bad conscience. Nothing will ever heal it except the blood of Christ.

All four Gospels mention this story.⁷⁹ The twelve apostles have just returned from their tour in Galilee and they are excited to give Jesus their report, but Jesus is surrounded by the great multitude. Where will the money come from to feed all the people? Mark tells us that Philip knows they have 200 denarii in the bag. A day's wage in that period is one denarius, and that amount will feed a family for a day. Therefore, the money in the bag will feed about 200 families. In the crowd are about 5,000 men and their families, so Jesus and His apostles will need at least 5,000 denarii to feed them. Jesus does not need any money to feed them; He uses the resources at hand to satiate their hunger and they are left with a basket of food for each of His apostles to eat on their trip up the coast to Capernaum.

Here we have the first reference to the size of the crowd that followed Jesus. It consists of more than five thousand men. In addition, women and children are present. We must remember that the apostles have come to tell Jesus about the success of their missionary journey. Seeking a place to pray, they board their boats and sail to a secluded area. The crowd follows them around the edge of the lake and wait for their arrival. Throughout the day, Jesus ministers to them, and as the day comes to a close, the people are hungry, but there is no place to purchase food for the multitude of people there by the seashore. Mark 6:39 gives a clue to the time of year. The people are reclining on the green grass, most likely the grass found only in the spring in Galilee. Two and a half years have passed since His baptism in the Jordan. It will be a year until His death on the cross.

To the Mountain to Pray

Matthew 14:²³ After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Jesus knows the thoughts of the people that He has just fed, and He does not want them to make Him an earthly king, so He slips off to the mountain to be by Himself.

Walking on Water

Matthew 14:²⁴ But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶ When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." ²⁸ Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." ²⁹ And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. ³³ And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

The feeding of the multitude occurs by the sea on a hillside by the town of Tiberius. Capernaum is just up the coastline about six miles. The apostles and some of the disciples set out for Capernaum in the dark and are frightened as a storm occurs when they are a little over halfway to the city. Jesus comes to their aid by walking on the water. Peter's attempt to walk on the water fails because he takes his eyes off the Lord; nevertheless, both Peter and Jesus climb into the boat and they arrive safely at Capernaum.

⁷⁹ Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13