

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 37 (September 8-14, 2013)

Now that you have studied the coming earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ, let's return to the parables our Lord uses to teach this event.

Sunday -- September 8 (Matthew 13:31-35)

Jesus uses two parables in today's text to teach the same truth. A mustard seed is the smallest of all the **garden plants**. I emphasize that point because some of you may know that a tobacco seed is smaller, but it is not planted in a garden. The mustard tree can grow to a height of ten feet under favorable conditions. Just as birds roost in the branches of a mustard tree, citizens of the kingdom will find rest under the care of our King, Jesus Christ (v. 31-32). The yeast illustration is similar in that the small amount of yeast permeates the entire mixture of flour, causing it to rise. Likewise, the kingdom of God is planted within us when we are born again as little children, but our faith should grow daily from that day until we become mature Christians (v. 33). Are you growing in your relationship with the Lord? Are you currently learning truths that were hidden from you until now? If so, you can know for sure that you are God's child and that His Spirit is living in you to guide you to all truth (v. 34-35; see also John 16:12-15).

Monday -- September 9 (Matthew 13:44-46)

We ended yesterday's study with Matthew 13:35: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world" (see Psalm 78:2). God's Holy Spirit is revealing to **this generation** truth that was hidden until now (see Acts 2:17-21) just like Asaph prophesied in his psalm quoted here in Matthew. The two parables in today's text teach the same lesson. The kingdom of heaven is so precious that we should willingly release our grip on all earthly possessions and allow God to use them for His glory alone. Jesus teaches, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). When we truly give our heart to Jesus, our stored-up treasures are His as well (Matthew 6:19-20). Can you trust Him with your material possessions? He has promised to "meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Tuesday -- September 10 (Matthew 13:47-52)

We discovered in the first of the kingdom parables that God's Word is sown among the saved and the lost (Matthew 13:18-23). Some receive it and grow a crop while others either reject it or else get so caught up in worldly things that the Word does not bear fruit. Today's parable illustrates the final judgment when angels will remove the unbelievers and leave the true believers to enter into the kingdom of God on earth (v. 47-50). Jesus asks His disciples a vital question: "Have you understood all these things?" They answer, "Yes" (v. 51). Jesus then makes a statement that has become the theme verse for my ministry (v. 52). My job is to **build** on the foundation that has already been laid by bringing in **new truths** while affirming the **old standards**. Jesus is the only foundation on which any church can be laid (see 1 Corinthians 3:11). Methods of reaching the lost have changed over the years, but the message remains constant!

Wednesday -- September 11 (Matthew 18:1-9)

Today is the 12th anniversary of the attack on America, so it seems appropriate to remember that humility, not power, is necessary for entrance into the **kingdom of heaven**. The disciples are always jockeying for positions of power, but Jesus reminds them that people enter the kingdom when they “become like little children” (v. 1-4). This is another reference to being born again! Since Jesus uses little children to illustrate the kingdom of heaven, it is imperative that we welcome them as a gift from God (v. 5). America will pay a dear price for allowing more than 50 million babies to be aborted (v. 6). Just this week, California passed a law saying that children could use any bathroom according to their individual perceived sexual identity. Can you imagine the perversion that will occur as a result of this law? The rest of today’s text addresses the punishment for lawmakers and lobbyists and pornographers whose decisions and products lead children (and adults) into all types of sin. May God wake us up before He sends a judgment that, by comparison, will make the original 9-11 look like an average day in history!

Thursday -- September 12 (Matthew 18:21-35)

Take the time to read this entire parable before beginning today’s study. Peter probably has someone in mind when he asks his question (v. 21). Jesus shoots down his self-righteousness by saying that forgiveness must not be reduced to a definite number of times; instead, it must be infinite just like God’s forgiveness for us (v. 22). Seventy-seven (or seventy times seven) is our Lord’s way of expressing this truth. Jesus then tells a story to illustrate the difficult teaching about the kingdom of heaven. A man who owes a debt beyond his ability to pay comes before the king and receives his judgment (v. 23-25). He begs for **time** to raise the money even though it is obvious that his debt is far too much to ever be repaid (v. 26). The gracious king forgives the tremendous debt and sets him free (v. 27). Likewise, God paid a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay! When was the last time you fell to your knees and thanked Him for the gift of salvation? We will continue this parable over the next two days.

Friday -- September 13 (Matthew 18:21-35)

Read the entire story again today so that you can feel the impact of this parable. The man who has received **mercy** from the king goes out looking for **justice** from his fellow man (v. 28). This combination will not work! If we demand **justice** from others, we will get **justice** from our Holy God! If we accept **mercy** from our Heavenly Father, we must extend **mercy** to our fellow man! The debtor’s request (v. 29) sounds strangely similar to his own request to the king (v. 26). Unfortunately, his reply is vastly different from his gracious king’s reply (v. 30). Others are watching to see if you really believe the message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone (v. 31). What are they observing in your interactions with others? Are they witnessing the same **mercy** and **grace** that God extends to you? If not, make a new commitment today to deal with others in the same way God is dealing with you!

Saturday -- September 14 (Matthew 18:21-35)

The rest of this parable is a strong warning to all professing Christians. Jesus receives us into His kingdom just as we are, but He never leaves us that way! His Holy Spirit begins a work within us to mold us into His image (see Philippians 3:20-21). I do not believe this parable teaches that a true believer can lose his/her salvation; instead, I believe He is warning that a genuine Christian will **desire** to offer the same **mercy** and **grace** that he/she has received from God (v. 32-34). The Lord does not allow any of us to miss the truth of His parable (v. 35). As citizens in the kingdom of heaven (Philippians 3:20), we must offer **mercy** and **grace** to those who have wronged us. How are you doing in your earthly dealings with others?