

# The Kingdom of Heaven

## Matthew 13: 1-23

The word 'parable' means a short fictional story with two levels of meaning. It is told to express a moral or truth.

Can you think of any modern-day parables?

### Hardness of Heart

Read Matt 13:10-17

1. Why did Jesus teach using parables?
2. In the Bible, the heart was considered to be the governing centre of a person, more than just our feelings. It is the seat of understanding, moral affection and will. What does it mean to be hard-hearted? (V15) Can you think of examples of people in the Bible whose hearts were hardened?
3. What are the benefits of a soft heart? (v11-12; see also Matt 5:8, Eph 3:17)
4. How should we approach reading of parables to ensure we understand the deeper meaning? (See also Matt 7:24)

### Soil Types

Read Matt 13:1-9, 18-23

5. How do the 4 soil types in this parable relate to the concept of hardness of heart?
6. Can the soil types be changed into good soil? How might they be transformed?
7. This parable speaks of the receptiveness of hearers to the word of God, primarily of people hearing for the first time but it can also be applied to Christians. How might we pray for non-Christians (Ezek 36: 26-7; remembering 2 Pet 3:9)?
8. We are encouraged to guard our hearts (Prov 4:23). How might we pray for our own hearts and how might we guard our hearts? (See also Ps 139:23; Ps 51:10)

### Pray Together

Now take time to pray for non-Christians you know and for each other in the group.

### Going Further

You might like to watch this video for a background on this parable and farming in the time of Jesus - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEqxXEG3qGY>

Or this one on why Jesus spoke using parables [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX-aAg4\\_U2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX-aAg4_U2Q)

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## Matthew 13: 1- 24-35

There are three parables in this section of Matthew 13.

- Matt 13:24-30 Parable of the Weeds
- Matt 13:31-32 Parable of the Mustard Seed
- Matt 13:33 Parable of the Yeast

For each one answer the questions 1-3. Then discuss questions 4-5 on all the parables together:

### Context

1. Thinking about the original audience (see v34) what aspects of the parable could they easily relate to and what might have been new or shocking to them? (Hint, burning weeds would not be new or shocking.)
2. What are the main elements of the story and what do they represent? (Hint, we get a peak at the answer for the first parable in Matt 13:36-43)

### Meaning

3. What questions does this parable raise for you?
4. Each parable begins with 'the kingdom of heaven is like...'. What do we learn about the kingdom of heaven from the comparison made?

### Our Relationship to God

5. What do we learn about God and his character from the parables?
6. Each parable includes a starting point, planting of seed or adding of yeast, followed by growth. How does this relate to Jesus' life and ministry? (See also Mk 1:15)

### Pray Together

Take time to praise God for what you have learnt about his kingdom of heaven and what that means for us.

### Going Further

If you have time (49 mins) listen to the podcast from the Bible Project on the Parable of the Weeds <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/matthew-p21-weeds-and-wheat/>

# The Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 13: 1- 44 – 46

Have you ever wanted something so badly you were prepared to sell or give up something else to get it? What are some of the things we treasure in our modern lives?

## Background

V44-45 In times of trouble or warfare people in Biblical times would bury their valuables so they would not be found by an enemy. Legally, anyone who did find a stash of buried valuables was entitled to keep it all. However, this labourer was employed by the owner of the field who could claim the labourer had dug up the treasure on his behalf.

V46 The merchant was a professional pearl merchant who knew the value of pearls in the business.

1. Who does this suggest the Kingdom of Heaven is open to? (See also Matt 5:3)

## Kingdom treasure brings true happiness

2. Where did the joy of the labourer and pearl merchant come from? What is the treasure that Jesus means for us to find?
3. Where does joy come from for the Christian (See I Pet 1:3-9)
4. What questions does this raise for you as you compare your own faith experience?

## Kingdom treasure vs other treasures

The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one. (Thomas Chalmers)

5. What did the labourer and pearl merchant have to do to gain their joy?
6. What do we have to do to gain joy? (See Jn 15:10-11; Mk 8:34-36)
7. Are there any areas of your life where you have been thinking that something else can be more satisfying than God?

## Pray Together

Take time to pray for each other as you respond to any areas of your life God might be working on. Pray that each one will find their joy and supreme satisfaction in God.

# The Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew 13: 1- 47-52

Take some time to share your FAQs about God's judgement.

Now take some time to ask God to help you hear and see the meaning Jesus is wanting us to hear from this passage on judgement.

1. What is Jesus main point from the story of the net and fish?
2. God promises a day of judgement to come, in the future. Who will be judged? (See also Jn 5:28-29: Rom 3:19)
3. When will the day of judgment be? (See also Matt 25:31-32)
4. How can God be both just and loving? If he loves us all, how could he punish anyone? (Ps 36:5-6)
5. How does God show love to victims, the oppressed (Ps 72:14) and to evil-doers (2 Pet 3:9)?
6. What is the basis of rejection? (See Jn 12:48)
7. What means of rescue do we have? (Jn 3:16-18; Rom 8:1; Acts 4:12)
8. What about babies and people in remote places who have not heard about Jesus? (See Lk 18:15-16; Rom 2:12-16)

## Pray Together

Take time to pray for each other as you respond to Jesus' warning in this parable.