The Kingdom of Heaven Parables

Beatitudes and Battle Strategies for Winning the Spiritual War



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Matthew 5 and 13

Background

In our recent Pennsylvania Bible conference (Fairview Bible Church), we looked at the issue of winning the battle for the mind (2 Cor. 10:3–6). This present study is intended to further clarify the mental attitudes that lead to effective spiritual living. These attitudes are contradictory to human viewpoint and can only be attained by faith and submission to the Spirit of God.

Our next conference, at Grace Bible Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas, will complete the series as we consider the book of Philippians—the epistle of the spiritual mind.

Introduction

"The Beatitudes are attitudes that ought to be." – Dr. Warren Wiersbe.

1. There are eight beatitudes (promises), and eight Kingdom of Heaven parables. Since the devil is at work in the Kingdom of Heaven parables (Matt. 13:38–39), we know these cannot refer to Christ's earthly kingdom, during which the devil will be imprisoned (Rev. 20:1–3).

2. While the beatitudes emphasize the disciples' character transformation, and its complimentary blessing, the Kingdom of Heaven parables deal with the disciples' conduct in the devil's world.

3. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to set up His earthly kingdom, which was postponed because of their rejection of Jesus (Matt. 23:37–39). Instead, Jesus inaugurated the "mystery" age of the Church (between Daniel 9:26–27), and His kingdom would develop spiritually in the midst of this present evil world. Not until after the Second C oming of Christ will He establish His earthly kingdom.

4. The setting: Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1–2), Jesus "sits as a refiner" (Mal. 3:3). In the parables, He *"goes out of the house"* (Matt. 13:1), anticipating Matthew 23:38–39.

5. The beatitudes promise blessing to saints; the parables anticipate judgment on the lost.

6. The beatitudes are a spiritual ladder we climb (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51); the Kingdom of Heaven parables are a ledger of our spiritual effectiveness.

7. We ought to study the beatitudes to gauge our spiritual maturity. We should study the parables to evaluate our effectiveness in our mission.

8. The beatitudes teach us how to *"draw near to God"* (James 4:8). They parallel the stages of entrance into the Tabernacle—the eight steps found in James 4:7–10 and 2 Petter1:5–8. Each stage leads to the next, there are no shortcuts!

Some Parallels with the Beatitudes

1. The first four beatitudes deal with the inner man, as do the first four commandments (Exod. 20:1–11). The second set of four deal with how this inner transformation affects how we deal with our fellow man, just as do the commands, five through eight (Exod. 20:12–17).

2. In the same way, the first four beatitudes fulfill the first great commandment (Matt. 22:36–38), while the second four fulfill the second great commandment (Matt. 22:39–40).

3. The eight beatitudes parallel the eight steps given by Peter for spiritual growth and productivity (2 Pet. 1:5–8).

4. Parallels can be found in the eight beatitudes and the eight "I AM" sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John (John 6:35, 8:12, 8:58, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, and 15:1—some of these are stated more than once in the context).

5. We can also see parallels in the eight signs of the Gospel of John, not in the exact same order (John 2:8–9, 2:19, 4:48–50, 5:8–9, 6:10–12, 6:19–20, 9:6–7, and 11:43–44).

There are many others—too many to list here.

Note on the Parables

The eight parables are actually in four sets of two. In each set, the second parable amplifies something implied in a subtle way in the first. For example:

1. The Parable of the Soils focuses on the good soil bearing fruit; the Parable of the Wheat and Tares amplify what happens with the unfruitful soil.

2. The Parable of the growth of the Mustard Seed is amplified by the action of the leaven. Both speak of the growth of the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. The Parable of the Treasure in the Field, of unknown value, is amplified by the Parable of the Great Pearl, worth more than all other pearls.

4. The Parable of the Dragnet speaks of the work of missions, drawing in both saints and sinners. This work can only be done effectively by the skilled scribe illustrated in the final parable—the goal to which every believer, and especially every Bible teacher, should aspire!

The Goal of Both Beatitudes and Parables

The interpretation of both promises and parables is really found in Matthew 5:13–16. The beatitudes teach us how to be salt and light. The parables show us how salt and light work in a fallen world. Salt creates thirst, and light provides guidance. Israel had been called to be salt and light to the world. In this calling, they utterly failed. Those disciples who follow the spiritual development of the beatitudes will be salt and light to the world. As a consequence, they will work out the effects of the parables on the world around them, bringing many to *"glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matt. 5:16).

SET ONE:
The Poor and the Productive

THE PROMISE: The Poor in Spirit

1. **Matthew 5:3. *"Blessed"*** (*makarios* means to share God's nature and happiness; see John 12:13; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 6:15). Christ-conformity brings us blessings. The greatest blessing of all is to share the "blessed" nature of God Himself (Mark 6:41; 2 Cor. 11:31; 1 Tim. 6:15).

2. Remember that in the Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham (Gal. 3:8), the promise was that *"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14).

3. ***"Poor in spirit."*** Spiritual poverty has nothing to offer, apart from the provisions of the grace of God. The Greek word *ptochos* speaks of the most abject, total form of poverty—the absence of everything.

4. Spiritual poverty is to know that we are *"without strength ... ungodly ... sinners ... enemies"* of God (Rom. 5:6–10), and that our only hope is God's mercy to us through Christ.

5. Poverty of spirit is to be *"wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked"* (Rev. 3:17) spiritually, and to know it.

6. The prophet Isaiah records God's attitude toward the poor in spirit:

> *"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."* Isaiah 66:2b

7. ***"Theirs is the King of Heaven."*** The verb *"is"* speaks of present entrance and possession. Poverty of spirit is the beginning of the spiritual life, and no one comes to faith in Christ until they recognize that "nothing good dwells in me" (Rom. 7:18, paraphrased).

Four Examples of Poverty of Spirit
The prophet Isaiah expressed his poverty of spirit in Isaiah 6:5, as did Peter (Luke 5:8). Another example of this quality is the thief on the cross, who was conscious of both his sinfulness and his helplessness (Luke 23:40–43), and the publican in (Luke 18:13–14).

Principle
All spiritual growth and effectiveness is dependent on the conviction of our total helplessness apart from the matchless grace of God through Christ. Only as we realize our own spiritual poverty can we then come to appreciate how rich we are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3, 7, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16).

"Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling."
– Excerpt from "Rock of Ages" (Augustus Toplady, 1776)

Poverty of Spirit—a Journey

The Apostle Paul's life illustrates that, even as we grow spiritually, our sense of poverty of spirit increases.

1. His early self-evaluation: *"Concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless"* (Phil. 3:6).

2. Next, *"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle"* (1 Cor. 15:9).

3. Then, *"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints"* (Eph. 3:8).

4. Finally, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief"* (1 Tim. 1:15).

Note: If you have been troubled by the sense that the more you grow, the worse you appear to yourself, take heart! You may be following Paul's path.

THE PARABLE: The Four Soils (Souls)

1. **Matthew 13:3–9.** This parable tells of four different soils (souls)—four kinds of hearers. The obvious goal of a farmer is to have productive soil.

2. Since Jesus interprets this and the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, we will expound on them from His interpretation. One thing we must focus on is His emphatic command.

3. ***"He ... has ears ... hear!"*** The verb *akouo* in Greek implies both to hear and to obey. It is a present, active, imperative. This is a command to hear and obey right now! The command is not just to hear, but to understand and apply what is taught. It takes faith to have spiritual ears! It takes diligence (2 Pet. 1:5) to obey what we hear.

   Biblical Examples

   a. James reminds us that we are to be *"doers of the word, and not hearers only"* (James 1:22).
   b. This follows Jesus' teaching that those who hear and do will be like the *"wise man who built his house on the rock"* (Matt. 7:24–25; Luke 6:46–48).
   c. It is the one who wills to do God's will, to whom understanding and the strength to obey is given (John 7:17). This fits with Jesus' point in vv. 13–16.

The Purpose of the Parables

1. **Matthew 13:10–17.** ***"Why do You speak to them in parables?"*** In Matthew 12, there is a major turning point in Jesus' ministry, and the disciples recognize a dramatic shift in His teaching method.

    a. First, the religious leaders accuse Him of violating the Sabbath (vv. 1–8).
    b. Then, because of His healing on the Sabbath, they plot to kill Him (vv. 9–14).
    c. Finally, as He was casting out demons, they accuse Him of being an agent of the devil (vv. 22–32). This, Jesus identifies, as the unforgiveable sin, which is simply unrepentant unbelief (John 3:16–19)—a heart hardened beyond the point of no return (1 Tim. 4:1–2).
    d. From this point on, the movement in this Gospel is toward the cross. Here, the disciples note the change and ask for clarification. Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9–10 and distinguishes between the leaders and multitudes who reject Him, and the disciples, and those who believe in Him.

2. ***"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"*** indicates new revelation never before given (Eph. 3:1–10; Col. 1:24–29). Specifically, the Jews were anticipating that, when Messiah came, He would immediately set up His earthly kingdom. Here, Jesus is teaching that in the interim before His Second Coming, the kingdom would be present on the Earth in a "mystery" form. This is why Jesus said to Pilate, *"My kingdom is not of this world"* (John 18:36). The time would come when it would be on Earth, but not yet.

3. Note Jesus' distinction between ***"them"*** and ***"you"*** (vv. 13–14), that is, unbelievers versus those who believe in Him. Every act of unbelief hardens the heart, until a point of no return is reached (Matt. 23:13–39).

4. Those who "have" are those who receive by faith, and to them more will be given. Every single act of faith is a deposit on greater grace and truth to be gained. Every act of unbelief forfeits that which could have been gained in the future.

5. Here, Jesus is enunciating a truth that is stated in many ways in the Scriptures but always has the same sense.

    "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, from him much will be required." Luke 12:48

6. ***"But blessed are your eyes ... and your ears"*** (v. 16). Here, the beatitudes, which the disciples received by faith, are being applied in their outward impact on a lost and dying world.

Interpretation of the Parable.

1. **Matthew 13:18–23.** Five Questions:

a. What is the seed? The Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23).
b. What do the soils represent? Different response from various souls (different kinds of listeners).
c. Who are represented by the good soil? Those who believe and act.
d. What is the fruit of the good soil? Ministry to the bad soils!
e. Are the bad soils beyond recovery? Perhaps only the hardened soil.

2. "The kingdom of heaven" refers to the kingdom of the saints in the midst of this present sinful world.

3. *"The word of the kingdom"* (v. 18), that is, the Gospel message, is the seed.

4. The four "soils" represent "souls" and how they respond to the message.

Principle

The issue often argued is which of these represent true believers. This totally misses the point of the parable, which is, what kind of soil are you? If we are truly "poor in spirit," we will both receive and apply God's Word. We will both grow spiritually and bear good fruit. Are you a 30% or 60% producer? The reason Jesus mentions 100% first is because this is the goal! Will you be content with 30 or 60% eternal reward?

Application

1. Poverty of spirit brings us the blessing of being a possessor, and therefore a steward of Christ's eternal kingdom.

2. The blessing of eternal life carries spiritual obligations (see the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25: 14–30) and the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11–26). Note that both parables end with the fate of the unsaved.

3. There is, in this parable, a lesson that is almost universally overlooked. What is the purpose of the fruit-bearing? Is there not an obligation of the believer to the other soils? Is it not possible to break up hardened ground, to clear the rocky and thorny soil? Are those conditions beyond hope? Certainly not!

"For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns." Jeremiah 4:3

"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you." Hosea 10:12

4. Our good fruit is in reaching those who have yet to receive the seed. The nonproductive soils can, with labor and prayer, be made productive.

5. We who "have" are obligated to seek and save those who "have not."

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." John 20:21

SET TWO:
The Mourners and the Multitudes

THE PROMISE

1. **Matthew 5:4.** ***"Blessed are ..."***
   a. Remember that the term *"blessed"* implies sharing the happiness of God by taking on His nature, being conformed to Christ.
   b. Here, Jesus declares the second stage of spiritual development and its complimentary blessing.

2. ***"Those who mourn."*** The Greek *pentheo* is a word that suggests, "a grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid" (Trench). The verb is a present, active, participle, which implies that which is an ever-present characteristic of the person.

3. Why should we mourn? First of all, for our own sinfulness (Psalm 51; James 4:9), then for the sins of other believers (1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 12:21), and finally, for lost souls (Matt. 9:37–38). Gratitude for our salvation produces a debt to the lost.

   "I am a ***debtor*** *both to Greeks* [cultured] *and to barbarians* [uncivilized], *both to the wise* [educated] *and to unwise* [ignorant]*."* Romans 1:14

4. The blessing is that this motivates us to be faithful witnesses for Christ.

5. ***"For they shall be comforted."*** The word *"comforted"* is from *parakaleo*, from which we get Paraklete, as a title for the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the source of God's comfort to us (John 14:25–27).

6. David proclaimed the spiritual blessing of those who mourn for sin.

   "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles ... The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves such as have a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:6, 18

7. God comforts us with grace and forgiveness for our sins, but also one of His greatest consolations is when we are used to reach others for Christ or strengthen a fellow believer in their own spiritual struggles.

THE PARABLE: The Wheat and Tares

1. **Matthew13:24–30.** A good man sows good seed in his field, but an enemy sows tares.

a. This parable moves from the unfruitful ground to that of hostility. Here, we are introduced to the spiritual conflict that rages in the age between the First and Second Coming of our Lord.
b. It is worth noting that Jesus uses the very language of John the Baptist in v. 30, where the tares are burned, and the wheat gathered into his barn (Matt. 3:12). Once again, Jesus interprets the parable for the disciples (and us), but it is up to us to make the application!

2. **Matthew 13:36–43 (Jesus' interpretation).** This interpretation is critical, because it gives us keys to interpreting the other parables. The main thrust is this: <u>the time of judgment is coming!</u> The wheat represents *"the sons of the kingdom,"* that is, believers. But the tares are *"the sons of the wicked one."* These will face eternal condemnation in hell. To read this parable, and be unmoved about the plight of the tares, is to miss the whole point. As with the unfruitful soils, the tares represent unsaved souls that may yet be delivered by hearing and responding to the Gospel by faith.

<u>Warning</u>
Jesus does not use *"sons of the kingdom"* here in the same way that He does in Matthew 8:12. There, He is using it as the Pharisees and most Jews used it—to refer only to those who were "the children of Abraham" (See John 3:7–9). Alfred Edersheim, a believing Jewish theologian, has documented in his book, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,* that this was a common term used by the Pharisees for themselves. Jesus uses their own interpretation to tell them that, because of their unbelief, they would be cast out of the Kingdom, while the Gentiles, whom the Rabbis said were created to ignite the fires of hell, would be welcomed into the Kingdom because of their faith. In this parable, Jesus uses His own true definition to refer to believers. It is due to the failure to make this distinction that some have come up with a destructive heresy, called "The Outer Darkness" teaching, that those believers who are not faithful and fruitful will be cast out of Jesus' presence in the Kingdom. This teaching is the result of very poor scholarship and exegetical skill.

<u>The Five Judgments</u>
a. **The Cross**—God the Father judged Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world (Isa. 53; 1 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2). This is the basis for all following judgments.
b. **The Bema Seat**—This is the judgment of all Church-age believers for the purpose of reward (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 5:9–10). This is for believers only and follows the Rapture of the Church.
c. The **Sheep and Goats** judgment—This occurs after the coming of Christ to Earth following the Tribulation. This judgment separates believers from unbelievers.
d. The **Great White Throne** judgment—This involves all unbelievers at the end of the Kingdom age—the Millennium (Rev. 20:11–15).
e. It stands to reason that there will be a **judgment of Old Testament and Tribulation saints** as well, and I assume it will occur at the beginning of the

Millennium, possibly during the extended time mentioned by Daniel after the Tribulation (Dan. 12:12).

3. **Five Interpretive Keys**
   These five keys help us to be consistent in our interpretation of these parables:

   a. *"Is like"* (vv. 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52). Many interpreters' conclusions are what the Kingdom of Heaven is "not like"! Especially vv. 31–33 (mustard seed and leaven) and vv. 44–46 (hidden treasure and great pearl).
   b. The Man = the Lord Jesus.
   c. The field = the world.
   d. The division = believers vs. unbelievers.
   e. The judgment = heavenly kingdom (barn) vs. hell (fire); Again, Matthew 3:12.

Principle
Unlike the ***"tares,"*** which cannot become wheat, the lost can be saved. As with the soils, the condition of a soul is not unchangeable. This is our great commission to reach the lost (Matt. 28:18–20). But we must have a burden (mourn) and seek to win the lost. Our attitude should be that of Paul, not Jonah!

Example
Consider the wicked king Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1–9). You could not find an eviler man in the pages of the Bible. Yet, in v. 18 we read, *"So Manasseh rested with his fathers ..."* This is a term used only for believers. We find out why when we read 2 Chronicles 33:10–17! Under judgment, Manasseh humbled himself and became a believer! This goes to affirm my point that, in the parables of the soils, the tares, and the dragnet, we must seek the lost for Christ.

SET THREE:
The Meek and the Mustard Seed

THE PROMISE: The Meek

1. **Matthew 5:5. *"The meek."*** The Greek word *praeis* (*praus*) speaks of surrender and submission, resulting in strict obedience. It was used of the well-trained Greek war horse, which was trained to obey every direction of the rider in the midst of combat.

2. Only in Jesus do we see the quality of meekness in its fullest expression (Matt. 11:29, 21:5). Peter clarifies the quality of Jesus' meekness in 1 Peter 2:23, *"Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."* Meekness is not weakness. It is the self-restraint of the truly powerful. It is to choose not to strike back, even if you are able.

3. The famous Lipizzaner horses of Vienna are trained based on the rediscovery of Xenophon's treatise on horsemanship from 400 BC during the Renaissance.

4. Meekness is the outward expression of inward humility. A humble attitude before God will result in meek submission to His word and will.

5. *"The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way"* (Psalm 25:9). In the KJV the word *"humble"* is translated "meek." The Hebrew word *anahv* implies "one who is humble, meek, lowly in spirit."

6. Where poverty of spirit recognizes one's inadequacy and insufficiency, meekness finds the all-sufficient supply in God's Word and will.

7. Moses is the greatest Old Testament example of meekness (Num. 12:3), but Jesus is the epitome of submission to the will of the Father (Matt. 11:29).

8. ***"For they shall inherit the earth."*** David understood this truth (Psalm 37:11) and sought to live by it. This promise will be fulfilled in the coming Kingdom Age, and in the New Heavens and Earth (2 Pet. 3:13–14). This inheritance is in the form of eternal reward for obedience to the Word and will of God and is rewarded with rulership (Matt. 25:21, 23).

9. Paul uses this reward to challenge the Hebrew Christians who were in danger of falling away from grace under persecution.

> *"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of* ***love*** *which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of* ***hope*** *until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through* ***faith*** *and patience* ***inherit the promises****."* Hebrews 6:10–12

THE PARABLE: The Mustard Seed

1. **Matthew 13:31–32.** This parable has often been interpreted as the Church, starting out pure and undefiled, but which in the last days would become a religious monstrosity, a refuge for the evil birds (the unsaved). This interpretation is "not like" the Kingdom of Heaven at all. Remember that the phrase *"is like,"* which Jesus uses seven times in these parables, is designed to tell us, not what the evil world is like, but what the Kingdom of Heaven is like
.
2. **Example: Mustard seeds and Mountains**
   *"**The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed."*** The only other times Jesus speaks of the mustard seed is when He compares it to faith (Matt. 17:20; Luke 17:6).

3. *"Assuredly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you"* (Matt. 17:20). Have you ever moved a mountain by your faith? Perhaps we do not understand the *"mountain"* that is implied. It may be that you have and didn't realize it.

4. A good example of mustard seed faith is found in Zechariah 4:6, which Jesus no doubt had in mind when He used this as an example of faith that moved mountains.

> *"So he* [the angel] *answered and said to me, This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel; Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it! ... For who has despised the day of small things?"* Zechariah 4:6, 10a

5. The reference goes back to Ezra 3–4 and Nehemiah 3–4. Zerubbabel began the rebuilding of the Temple, and Nehemiah was building the wall. There was great opposition against them, both from enemies outside, and traitors within. Also, the workers were few and were overworked and discouraged. Just when they were at their weakest point, their enemies planned to attack them (Nehemiah 4). This is the *"mountain"* Zechariah refers to and helps us understand what Jesus had in mind. In Scripture, "mountain" often refers to a ruler or kingdom (Dan. 2:35, 45; Rev. 17:9). It can also refer to great problems that we face that seem overwhelming. What we need to understand is this, <u>behind every great problem is a fallen kingdom</u>, and when we overcome the problem by faith, we have brought down the kingdom and made it a level plain (Eph. 6:10–18).

6. **The Mustard Seed Interpreted**
   Again, I take the *"man"* here to be the Lord Jesus. He came and planted the ***"mustard seed"*** of faith on this Earth. From its small beginning, it would become a great kingdom, as illustrated by the large growth of the plant. ***"A man"*** = Jesus. *"**Grown ... greater ... nest"*** = The Heavenly Kingdom (Dan. 4:10–12, 20–22; Ezra 31:3–6), which, as illustrated by Daniel 4:12 and 20, becomes a shelter to many nations, both the small and the great, and is a source of nourishment to all. Jesus is the Man who sowed mustard seed faith in the world, which will grow into a glorious kingdom nourishing and sheltering all who believe, both great and small, from every tongue and nation (Rev. 7:9).

   <u>Note</u>: Many interpret this as the Church growing into a religious monstrosity, which shelters the world. This is "not like" the kingdom. What was it Jesus said of His Church?

> *"On this rock* [mustard seed faith] *I will build my church, and <u>the gates of hell</u>* [the devil's mountain] *shall <u>not prevail against it</u>."* Matthew 16:18

   To interpret this parable in the way it is often interpreted is to deny both the words of Jesus Christ and the glorious plan of God.

   <u>Principle</u>
   If we are <u>meek</u>, we'll have <u>mustard seed faith</u>; it will work for the expansion of God's kingdom and will be a shelter for the small and weak (1 Cor. 1:26–29). In reality, every step of faith you have taken, every act of meekness in obedience to God's

Word, forgiveness of those who have hurt you, every prayer for others, and witness you have given, has moved invisible mountains!

"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."
Romans 8:37

SET FOUR:
The Famished and the Fed

THE PROMISE: Those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

1. **Matthew 5:6. *"Hunger and thirst for righteousness."*** The use of the present participles speak of a way of life, receiving and acting on the Word of God.

2. The word *"righteousness"* has a definite article; it is the righteousness found in Jesus Christ alone, both imputed and imparted to believers.

3. *"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirst for God, for the Living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"* (Psalm 42:1).

4. David's spiritual hunger was filled in the provisions of God's grace. *"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies"* (Psalm 23:5**)**.

5. *Jesus said, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* (John 6:54**)**.

6. This eating and drinking is not a one-shot act, but a way of life.

   Question: If we truly hunger and thirst for righteousness, where is it to be found? The answer is three-fold: in the Gospel, spiritual growth, and fruitfulness.

   "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Romans 1:16–17

   a. Righteousness begins at salvation, with the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to the one who believes in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).
   b. The imputation of righteousness resides within the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), which is *"created in true righteousness and holiness"* (Eph. 4:24), and cannot sin.
   c. This "new man" is the "holy of holies" in the temple of your body, in which the Holy Spirit dwells (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

d. As we are filled and led by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), we feed on the Word of God, by which we are transformed into the likeness of Christ (Psalm 103:5; Rom. 8:29, 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10).
e. This is the only way for us to move *"from faith to faith"* (Rom. 1:17), from spiritual infancy to maturity, to become spiritual witnesses and warriors in service to Jesus Christ, in the building up of His kingdom.

7. *"They shall be filled," chortazo*: filled full, fully satisfied.

"He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty." Luke 1:53.

"He who comes to Me shall never hunger, he who believes in Me
shall never thirst." John 6:35

<u>The Prelude to the Promise</u> (John 6:1–14)
In the incident that led up to these promises, Jesus had fed over 5,000 men, women, and children. It was Andrew (the disciple always bringing people to Jesus) who brought the little boy with five loaves and two small fishes. These *"loaves"* were more like biscuits, and the fish were *"small."* The miracle was not just in the multiplication of these in Jesus' hands, but that the people ate *"as much as they wanted"* and were *"filled"* (vv. 11–12), and that the disciples gathered in their baskets (probably a shoulder bag that each of them carried) **twelve full bags** of leftovers (v. 13).

"*And of His **fullness** we have all received, and grace for grace."*
John 1:16

The little word *"for"* here is *anti* in Greek, meaning "against," as in, "stacked up and overflowing." It is from that abundant supply of His grace that we are exhorted to *"Be **filled** with* [by the agency of] *the Spirit"* (Eph. 5:18). When we are filled, controlled by His Spirit within, we will also have a life that is *"Being **filled with the fruits of righteousness** which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God"* (Phil. 1:11).

<u>Application</u>
1. God is faithful to meet the needs of His children. We call this the logistical grace of God.

"And My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by
Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

2. The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the *"Good Shepherd"* (John 10:11), and if He lays down His life for the sheep, He will surely supply our needs.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Psalm 23:1–3.

3. When we find ourselves in times of lack, it is because we have either strayed from His path, and our prayers are hindered, or we are going through a time of faith-testing (James 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:6–7). I am so often driven back to the little yet powerful book of James.

> *"You fight and war. Yet, you have not because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures* [lusts]*."* James 4:2b–3

4. The principle that James is presenting is simply this: God's provision is found in His path. As Hudson Taylor famously said, "God's will, done God's way, will never lack God's supply."

<u>THE PARABLE</u>: The Woman and the Leaven

1. **Matthew 13:33.** ***"The Kingdom of Heaven <u>is like</u> leaven,"*** NOT "is unlike!" Neither the woman, nor the leaven represents evil! Though this is often a false interpretation of this parable (one which sadly I previously held).

   a. What made the Feast of Unleavened Bread special (Exod. 12:14)?
      1) It began on the Day of Passover, salvation through the lamb (John 1:29).
      2) They ate it in haste, prepared to move out in liberation (Exod. 2:11).
         a) They were to have their belt on their waist (Eph. 6:14). This is the figure of one girded for action (1 Pet. 1:13).
         b) They were to have their sandals on their feet (Eph .6:15). Here is the picture of one ready to advance (Mark 6:9; Acts 12:8).
         c) They were to have their staff in their hand (Heb. 11:21). The staff was both the support and weapon of the wayfaring man (Psalm 23:4; Mark 6:8).
         d) The Passover pictures salvation by substitutionary sacrifice (the cross of Christ). The feast of unleavened bread is depicting readiness to move out on the journey to the promised land (Canaan pictures spiritual maturity, the faith-rest life: Hebrews 3–4).
         e) Once in the land, their daily bread was leavened, because they were at rest, and at peace.

   b. Why would we assume that the woman represents evil? In Isaiah 49:15, God compares Himself to a mother having compassion for her only son. There is no biblical basis for this interpretation.

   c. Just because Jesus once referred to *"the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"* (Matt. 6:16) does not imply that leaven is evil. In fact, once the disciples understood His meaning, we read,

"Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."
Matthew 6:12

d. The next feast after unleavened bread, which included *"firstfruits"* (Lev. 23:4–14), was *"the feast of weeks"* (Pentecost, Lev. 23:15–21). Where firstfruits celebrated the beginning of the barley harvest, the Feast of Weeks celebrated the end of the wheat harvest. In this feast, leaven was required (Lev. 23:17). Leaven by itself is not a symbol of evil.

e. Since Pentecost represents the beginning of the Church Age, perhaps the leaven was symbolic of the impact of the Gentiles in spreading the Gospel message around the world. (Pentecost—*Shavuot*—was called by ancient Rabbis the "mystery feast"). How interesting!

2. **Three Measures of Meal**
We actually have only one example in Scripture that corresponds to this figure. In Genesis 18:1–8, we have a biblical example of a woman using three measures of meal. Abraham is visited by the Lord and two angels. He offers to prepare a *"morsel"* for them to eat. Instead, the "morsel" turns into a *"feast"* for the Lord. Admittedly, this bread would have been unleavened, for there was not time for the bread to rise. However, the principle is that what Abraham considered a "small" offering was in fact a feast fit for a king. Never underestimate the value of your smallest offering to God. To Him, every offering given in faith is a feast! Every prayer offered in the Spirit is as incense before His throne (Rev. 5:8, 8:4).

Principle
If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, then our satisfaction is to see it permeate our lives, families, church, and world. Nothing we receive in the spiritual life is for us alone. It is all a deposit of eternal truth, to be shared with our own sphere of influence in this world. The hunger must precede the filling.

"He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty." Luke 1:53

Our lack of spiritual hunger explains the ineffectiveness of our lives. This "hunger" is the *"diligence"* we see in 2 Peter 1:5 and 2 Timothy 2:15.

Transition
We should note that, while the first four beatitudes deal with inner transformation, the last four present the outward effect of this in our conduct. Only those who recognize their spiritual poverty, who mourn over their sinfulness, who in meekness submit to the authority of the Lord, and who hunger and thirst for righteousness, will be enabled to become merciful to others, pure in heart toward the Lord, peacemakers between men and God, and who, as a result, will be persecuted for it.

SET FIVE:
The Merciful and the Mission

THE PROMISE: The Merciful

1. **Matthew 5:7** ***"The merciful"*** will ***"obtain mercy."*** This is what James 2:8, 13 teaches us. To be merciful in this life will bring mercy at the Bema Seat**.** *"If you really fulfill the royal law … 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well ... For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*

2. We also see in this a fulfillment of Jesus' words, *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you"* (Matt. 7:1–2). The word *"merciful"* is from *eleeo*, "to show mercy or kindness." Mercy is given to those who do not deserve it.

3. To be merciful is to reflect the character of God toward us. *"Therefore be merciful, just as your Father is also merciful"* (Luke 6:36). In the context, mercy is seen to be an expression of the love of God for those who have no claim to it and do not deserve it.

4. Paul tells us that if we sow mercy, we will reap mercy from God. *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"* (Gal. 6:7).

How Can We Show Mercy?

   a. We are all surrounded by people who are in need of mercy. This world is an unmerciful place, becoming more so by the day, as we see the hatred, malice, and vindictiveness all around us.
   b. *"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust"* (Matt. 5:44–45).
   c. *"He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness"* (Rom. 12:8). An act of mercy that may involve a begrudging attitude would be humiliating or shameful to the recipient.
   d. *"God, Be merciful to me* [the] *sinner"* (i.e., the tax collector, Luke 18:13). *"Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble"* (Psalm 41:1).

5. *"Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses"* (Mark 11:25).

6. David is one of the best examples of one who was merciful, in his dealings with Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul, who persecuted David unmercifully (2 Sam. 9:1–13).

THE PARABLE: The Hidden Treasure

1. **Matthew 13:44.** ***"Treasure"*** (i.e., Israel, see Exod. 19:5; Psalm 135:4), ***"a man,"*** Jesus, ***"in a field,"*** the world. I choose in my interpretation to stick with the clues given in vv. 37–39.

2. The man *"**sells all that He has**"* to buy the field. This is precisely what the Lord Jesus did to bring eternal life into this world (Phil. 2:5–9). *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9).

   Many interpret this as speaking of the value of eternal life, and of our willingness to give up everything for it. This is akin to John MacArthur's interpretation of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23). In his book, *The Gospel according to Jesus,* he declares that this is the clearest expression of the Gospel message in the Bible. This interpretation produces a works-salvation mentality. However, we do not buy, nor earn, eternal life. It is a "free gift" of God's grace (Rom. 6:23).

3. Again, as with the unfruitful soil, and the tares, the *"field"* represents the world. Christ died for the world, and each lost soul can become treasure.

   Principle: Be merciful like Jesus: Fulfill your mission like Paul, *"I am a debtor ... I am ready ... I am not ashamed of the Gospel ..."* (Rom. 1:14–17)!

   "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose"
   –Jim Elliot.

5. The Thessalonian Church is a fine example of relatively new believers, who were having a spiritual impact on the world around them (1 Thess. 1:2–10).

   a. They were growing in the three primary Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love (vv. 2–3; Rom. 5:1–5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5–6; Col. 1:4–5; 1 Thess. 5:8; Heb. 6:10–12; 1 Pet. 1:3, 5, 8; 21–22).
   b. They received God's Word in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (v. 5).
   c. They became followers, then examples, and finally witnesses to all Macedonia and Achaia (vv. 6–8).
   d. This outward missionary impact was the result of inward spiritual transformation, as they *"turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven"* (vv. 9–10). These verbs reflect the repentance of faith, the service of love, and the endurance of hope!

e. Jesus gave everything to gain the treasure of lost souls. We are called to imitate Him, and to seek and find our own eternal treasure. *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* (Matt. 6:20). It comes at great cost!

SET SIX:
The Pure and the Prize

THE PROMISE

1. **Matthew 5:8. *"The pure in heart."*** The word *katharos* refers to that which has been washed and made clean. Note that the focus of this cleansing is the heart, which requires regeneration (new birth) by faith in Christ (Titus 3:5).

2. The use of *"heart"* here speaks of the center of the spiritual life (the mind/soul), just as the heart is the center of physical life. *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12). See also 1 Timothy 1:5.

3. This purity of heart requires two cleansings (John 13:10): one is permanent, once for all (Eph. 5:26); the other is daily (1 John 1:9). This involves both positional and practical sanctification.

4. Paul speaks of three phases of salvation, or sanctification. *"That we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us* [past] *... and does deliver us* [present]; *in whom we trust that He will still deliver us* [future]*"* (2 Cor. 1:10).

   Note: While the context indicates that Paul is speaking here of deliverance from trials in this life, the principle holds true for the entirety of the spiritual life.

5. ***"They shall see God."*** How? In the effect of their lives, witness, and labor. *"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel ..."* (Num. 24:17, prophecy of Balaam).

6. The concept of seeing God implies intimate knowledge and association with Him, such as Moses had. *"He made known His ways to Moses, His acts* [works] *to the children of Israel"* (Psalm 103:7). The great tragedy of Israel's history is that they did not learn God's ways (Heb. 3:10).

7. This spiritual intimacy is promised to those who consistently abide in Christ (John 14:21, 23; 15:4–5, 7–10).

THE PARABLE: The Pearl of Great Price

1. **Matthew 13:45–46.** The ***"pearl"*** may represent the Church, as the ***"treasure"*** may represent Israel (Rev. 21:9, 21).

2. *"I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife ... the holy Jerusalem ... twelve gates twelve pearls."* The *"pure in heart"* will continue seeking *"the pearl."*

3. In ancient Israel, pearls were valued above gold and silver.

Principle: We who are the Body of Christ, are here to do His will and work on this Earth. Let us be willing to "count the cost" (Luke 14:28) to gain the prize for which Christ died.

SET SEVEN:
The Peacemakers and the Purged

THE PROMISE: The Peacemakers

1. **Matthew 5:9.** ***"The peacemakers,"*** i.e., ministers of reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5:18–21, Paul clarifies the ministry of reconciliation.

    a. We must be motivated by the love of Christ (v. 14). This love recognizes that Christ died for all because all were spiritually dead. It is critical to consistent interpretation to hold to the fact that Jesus Christ died for all mankind (John 3:16; Acts 17:26–31; 1 John 2:2).
    b. We must recognize that, since Christ died for all, those who live by faith in Him have a debt to serve Him in reaching the lost (v. 15).
    c. This changes our perspective of our fellow men. We see them, not from human viewpoint, but from the divine, as souls for whom Christ died, and who may become new creatures in Christ (vv. 16–17).
    d. Our life mission and ministry become one of bringing men into reconciliation with God through Christ (vv. 18–20).
    e. Our message is that God the Father has so worked through His Son that all men might become righteous through faith in Him (v. 21).

2. ***"They shall be called the sons of God,"*** i.e., bearing His likeness, reflecting His character, love, and sacrifice. To become a son of God, one must first be born into the family by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:3, 7). To be recognized as a son of God, one must grow into His likeness (Matt. 5:44–45).

3. Jesus nicknamed James and John *"Sons of Thunder"* (Mark 3:17), most likely because of their temper and vocal tirades. They were sons of thunder because they sounded like thunder (Luke 9:54). The Jewish usage of this phrase is like our saying, "Like father, like son."

THE PARABLE: The Dragnet

1. **Matthew 13:47–50.** ***"Like a dragnet"*** the Gospel message draws in many! Again, *"I am a debtor to the Greeks* [sophisticated] *and to the barbarians* [uncultured], *both to the wise* [educated], *and the unwise* [untaught]*"* (Rom. 1:14).

2. In 2 Corinthians 5:14–21, the Apostle Paul sets forth the mission of every disciple. In this passage we see motivation (vv. 14–15), mission field (vv. 16–17), ministry (vv. 18–19), and message (vv. 20–21). We all have a sphere of influence, our own personal mission field. As we live out our faith in the power of the Spirit, we will impact both believers and unbelievers for Christ.

3. This is in keeping with the three-fold ministry which God gives to every believer (Heb. 10:19–25). These are priesthood (vv. 19–22), directed toward God in prayer, ambassadorship (v. 23), directed toward the lost in witness, and ministry (vv. 24–25), directed to fellow believers through our spiritual gift.

4. It is not for us to do the work of separation. Only God knows the hearts of men. Our work is to live by faith and serve in the Spirit and let God do the sorting.

Principle: If we are true "peacemakers," we will find and fulfill our role in bringing in as many as possible into the Gospel net. We know a day of judgment, "separating the wicked from the just," But first let them hear and respond to the Gospel message!

SET EIGHT:
The Persecuted and the Prosperous

THE PROMISE: The Persecuted

1. **Matthew 5:10–12.** ***"Persecuted for righteousness' sake,"*** that is, the development of all of the above, which we take step by step in our growth and ministry to others.

2. We should note the connection between *"for righteousness' sake"* (v. 10), and ***"for My sake"*** (v. 12). All our righteousness is a gift from Jesus Christ.

3. ***"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*** We end where we began, but in Matthew 5:3 we possess it for ourselves, where in Matthew 5:10–12, we seek it for others. Our *"reward in heaven"* is the *"crown of joy"* (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19), of those we have helped to bring to faith in Jesus Christ.

4. ***"Great is your reward in heaven."*** Reward here has the definite article: this is a specific reward for those who reach the pinnacle of spiritual development, thus incurring the wrath of a Christ hating world.

5. ***"For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*** The reward is clarified as the ability to join the ranks of the "heroes" of biblical history in the heavenly kingdom (Hebrews 11).

The Purpose of Spiritual Progress

1. **Matthew 5:13–17.** Those who follow the spiritual path of vv. 1–12 will be the salt and light of the world (vv. 13–16).

2. Salt gives flavor; it both purifies and preserves. But it also creates thirst. The effect of full and true discipleship will be to stimulate a spiritual thirst in those around us.

3. Light both comforts those who are in it, but it also guides those who are in darkness.

4. As salt and light, the true disciples will create in others a thirst for righteousness and guide them into the light of Christ.

5. The whole goal of the beatitudes is to produce disciples with an evangelistic drive that will bring many to faith in Jesus Christ.

"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3

Note: The Beatitudes introduce the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus finished this message, we read, *"The people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"* (**Matt. 7:28–29**).

THE PARABLE: The Wise Scribe

1. **Matthew 13:51–52**. ***"Every scribe instructed"*** (i.e., well-taught disciple) The word *"instructed"* is from *matheteuo*, (discipled) and is an aorist passive participle, meaning to be fully instructed or discipled.

2. Jesus' question, ***"Have you understood all these things?"*** (v. 51) is the key to being a well-instructed scribe, who is able to teach. Both the beatitudes and these parables are a concise harmony of both Old and New Testament truth. *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill"* (*Matt. 5:17*).

3. ***"Is like a householder"*** (i.e., a good steward), ***"who brings out of his treasure things new and old."*** This speaks of skill in relating Old and New Testament truths, demonstrating the unity and consistency of Scripture.

4. The great example of the wise scribe is Ezra, as seen in Ezra 7:6, 10–11, 25. *"For Ezra had prepared his heart* ***to seek*** *the Law of the Lord, and* ***to do*** *it, and* ***to teach***

statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). In this one verse, the whole idea of the beatitudes and the parables is summarized.

5. Thus, the ending of the beatitudes (Matt. 5:13–17) and the ending of the parables in these verses, both conclude with the same objective—to effectively win the lost to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

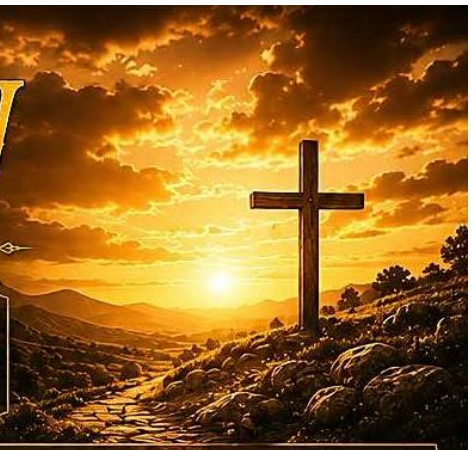
Principle: Paul teaches us that *"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12). The more effective we are in presenting God's Word to an evil world, the more will we experience persecution.

Conclusion

We need to daily climb the ladder of the beatitudes (ascending and descending, Gen. 28:10–12; John 1:50–51) and fill out the ledger of the Kingdom of Heaven parables. Internal transformation must come before external triumph. Don't get weary, don't give up—keep pressing on for the prize of the high calling we have in Christ (Phil. 3:14)!

MATTHEW

THE KINGDOM WAY OF JESUS



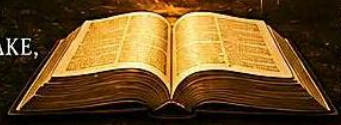
8 BEATITUDES. 8 PARABLES.
The Heart of the Sermon on the Mount.
MATTHEW 5–7 & 13

8 BEATITUDES
(MATTHEW 5:3-10)

1. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
2. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, for they shall be comforted.
3. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, for they shall inherit the earth.
4. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, for they shall be satisfied.
5. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, for they shall obtain mercy.
6. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, for they shall see God.
7. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, for they shall be called sons of God.
8. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

ONE TEACHER.
ONE KINGDOM.
ONE WAY
THAT LEADS
TO LIFE.

"JESUS TAUGHT THE CROWDS... AND THEY WERE AMAZED AT HIS *teaching*."
MATTHEW 7:28-29



8 PARABLES
(MATTHEW 13)

1. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER — Matthew 13:3-9
2. THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES — Matthew 13:24-30
3. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED — Matthew 13:31-32
4. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN — Matthew 13:33
5. THE PARABLE OF THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD — Matthew 13:44
6. THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE — Matthew 13:45-46
7. THE PARABLE OF THE NET — Matthew 13:47-50
8. THE PARABLE OF THE WISE SCRIBE — Matthew 13:51-52

Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.

KINGDOM FOCUSED | CHRIST CENTERED | SCRIPTURE ROOTED | SPIRIT LED

COME AND HEAR THE KING.

MATTHEW 5–7 & 13