

July 30, 2023

“Finding and Gathering”  
Lesson 4

Matthew 13:44-52

**Intro**

This final lesson about Jesus’ teaching through parables is both similar and different to the previous studies about His parables. All parables follow a similar pattern: they are stories to teach a point, they have a beginning (setting the scene), a middle (a problem or crisis), and an ending (the problem is resolved). However, the parables in today’s study are different in that they are much shorter. Think of Twitter. A tweet is limited to 280 characters, including any spaces used. From the NIV version of the parables in today’s lesson, the first uses 163 character, the second 161, the third 252 (if you don’t include the interpretation part), and the fourth 176. All four parables are short enough that Matthew could have tweeted them if our technology existed in his day!

Jesus’ parables were usually limited in details—only the ones needed to make His point. The four parables in our study passage today are found only in Matthew’s gospel.

**Read Matthew 13:44-52**

1. vs. 44: Burying treasure sounds like a pirate movie, but in Jesus’s day, it was a common practice
  - The field mentioned would have been a farming plot
  - This means it would have likely been secluded
    - This suggests the man would have found the treasure while all alone
    - The man then hides it again, and goes to buy the field
  - Jewish law at the time states who the treasure would belong to
    - If taken up from the ground, it belongs to the current owner of the land
    - If left in the ground, the treasure belongs to the one buying the land
    - This process doesn’t seem illegal—Jesus says nothing bad about this action
    - The man doesn’t steal the treasure—he buys the field from the owner
  - Buying the field came with challenges; he “sold all he had” to buy the field
  - He’s sure that the treasure is worth more than the amount he paid for the field
  - This parable points out that the “kingdom of heaven” has value beyond counting
  - However, it calls for a total commitment (all he had) to be part of it
2. vs. 45: The second parable is about a merchant looking for fine pearls
  - The word “searching” is closer in meaning than just mere looking
  - Pearls are beautiful to look at, and some (the black ones) are very rare
3. vs. 46: This pearl merchant finds one of great value
  - He has been trading in pearls for awhile; he knows how to evaluate pearls
  - This one is beyond any pearl he has ever seen before
  - As with the previous parable, the merchant sells “everything he had” to buy the pearl
  - If he was traveling, this would mean all the other pearls he had purchased
  - It might also mean any spare clothes, his bags, maybe even his camel/donkey
  - If he’s not traveling, it means he went home and sold everything to buy this one pearl

The point of this parable is similar to the first one

Entering the kingdom of heaven requires a complete transfer

We are to give up all that we “own”

We become stewards of all we have

4. vs. 47-48: The familiar activity of fishing is the topic of the third parable

The common practice was for two ships to cooperate in catching fish

A net was lowered, then the bottom would be raised to trap the fish

A full net would be too heavy to raise up to the boats

Instead the ships “pull up to shore”, trapping the fish on the beach

The fish then get sorted into “good fish” and “bad fish”

The good fish get taken to market to be sold

The bad fish are likely thrown into the lake or left for scavengers

5. vs. 49-50: These verses are a summary of the actions in the previous three

Here, the angels come and separate the wicked from the righteous

This is like the separation of wheat from weeds, and good from bad fish

Jesus makes clear the significance of this parable

These actions will occur at the “end of the age”

There will be a judgment involving a separation into “good” and “bad”

The bad / wicked will receive a punishment that won't end

6. vs. 51: Jesus asks them after the explanation if they've understood “all these things”

This refers to the four parables He's just delivered

The parables teach several things about the kingdom of Heaven

It will cost all they have to secure it

The reward upon receiving it is greater than what they will give up

There is a warning

Failure to give all will result in not receiving the greatest reward

When Jesus says, “Have you understood all these things?”, he's really saying this:

“Are you ready to give up everything to follow me?”

7. vs. 52: This last part is considered a parable by some, but not by all

Jesus here is teaching about the kingdom of heaven, however, so it fits with the others

A teacher of the law made copies of Scripture by hand

Thus, he was an expert in the Law of Moses

Jesus says this person is “like the owner of a house”

This owner will bring out “new treasures as well as old”

This refers to the spiritual treasures of Jesus as well as Moses

The person who is an expert in the Law of Moses should eagerly accept the new of Jesus

However, Jesus frequently criticizes and condemns them and the Pharisees

Those criticized were unwilling to accept Jesus and His teachings

There were some who did accept them

Finally, this owner is bringing treasures out of his storeroom

Others are being allowed to see items of great value

This action shows a willingness to share what is most important to this man

Application: Jim Elliot, a missionary in Ecuador, was killed in 1956 by member of a tribe he was trying to bring the gospel to. In his journal in 1949, he wrote his view of serving Jesus:

“He is no fool who give what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

This is the key point of all the parables in today’s study. Remaining faithfully dedicated to the kingdom of heaven calls for us to value the kingdom more than anything. The cost is a willingness to give up what we have, all we have, to Jesus’ control in choosing to follow Him.

Prayer: Father God, help our eyes to see and our ears to hear clearly the priceless nature of Your kingdom. Strengthen our courage and resolve to yield all we have for it. In Jesus’ name, Amen.