

## The Teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus' proclamation had a powerful effect. He spoke as one who had power: "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt 7:29) He sent His own into all the world and said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18)

The Savior proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God, the joyous message of saving love to sinners. Thus, Jesus Christ took mastery of men's hearts with His forgiveness. The power and slavery of sin gave way. The call of the kingdom resounded: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 4:17) The Lord commanded His disciples also to proclaim in the same manner. (Matt 10:7)

The kingdom of Heaven is the one and same eternal kingdom of God. It is a kingdom of grace in time and the kingdom of God's glory in Heaven. We reach the glory of Heaven through the grace kingdom, as Luther teaches.

As the Lord's followers, we instruct those in distress over temporal matters: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt 6:33)

### Parabolic Teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven

The kingdom of God is a concept in the doctrine of salvation. When this kingdom approaches, it is possible to repent and believe the gospel. There is no salvation outside of God's kingdom. Salvation is in believing the gospel, by which we are translated "into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Rom. 1:16, Col. 1:13)

Jesus proclaimed an open message of the kingdom of God. He also taught of it with parables and explained to His own the mysteries of the kingdom. With His parables, He showed the preciousness of God's kingdom as a treasure of treasures. (Matt. 5-7)

Once the disciples asked the Savior why He spoke many parables to the people. To this question Jesus answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matt. 13:11) "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." (Matt. 13:13) The unbelievers did not have the disciples seeing eyes nor hearing ears, therefore they did not recognize the kingdom of God.

### Parabolic Sermon of the Kingdom of Heaven

The thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew is like a summary of Jesus' parables and a good example of how His parables enlighten the kingdom of God. Jesus taught these parables from a boat, or kept a "boat sermon." The sermon contains four parables. After arriving home, He explained more to His students and spoke four more parables.

### Parables to the Multitudes

**The Parable of the sower** and four types of soil (vv.3-9; explanation to His disciples vv. 18-23.) If we do not watch in faith, evil will overcome us. The seed of God's kingdom, the Word, and also its fruits will disappear from our hearts. Some relinquish faith because of persecution, they do not wish to suffer for faith. The heart has remained hard. It is thorn-filled if it yields to the cares of the world, lusts, and enticements. Although we are evil in ourselves, the soil is called good if God can govern it with His grace and protect our hearts. When He cares for it, even fruit grows. We can be protected in faith.

**The parable of wheat and tares**, or darnel, (vv. 24-30, explanation to the disciples vv. 36-43) is a demonstration that the children of the kingdom, the Lord's own, as good seed, are sown into the field of the world among the children of evil. We have not yet been taken out of the world. Most important is that we are protected from evil. (John 17:15) Living scattered abroad, we have been cast like seed into different areas so

that the kingdom of God could gather men to salvation. The children of evil are separated finally at the harvest, the end of the world There is thus hope that there would still be penitent people.

**The parable of the mustard seed** (vv. 31-32) shows that the kingdom of God and its work is hidden in smallness and insignificance. Nevertheless, a very great tree grows from a small seed. Do not doubt, therefore, child of God. Do not belittle the gift that you have received. The seed of the gospel is unperishing. It creates anew (compare 1Peter 1:23-25.) Shelter for all the migrating birds of Heaven is found on the branches of the tree of God's kingdom.

**The parable of the leaven of God's kingdom.** (vv. 33) The leaven of God's kingdom is the opposite of the leaven of the permissiveness of sin. God wishes to rule with His grace so that sin would no longer rule. (compare Rom. 6:14) The dough pictures people. The gospel wishes to spread in the dough as good leaven so that all would be saved. (compare Matt. 24:14) The woman is the congregation mother, for the gospel and the children of God are always together.

### **Parables for the Disciples**

At home Jesus first related the **parable of the treasure hidden in the field.** (v.44) In this field of clay, the lowly throng of God's children, the best treasure of God's kingdom, the Lord Jesus is found. "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9) "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4:7)

**The parable of the merchant man** who found the precious pearl (vv. 45-46) shows, as does the previous parable, that it is good to give up the former life, the slavery of sin, when grace becomes most precious to the heart.

**The parable of the net of God's kingdom** (vv. 47-50) emphasizes the importance of watching. If one is only outwardly attached to the net, it is no guarantee of salvation. Watch therefore, dear child of God. Believe sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. Soon, when the festivity begins, the living fish will be gathered into the vessels of Heaven.

At the end, the Lord yet spoke a **parable of the scribes of the kingdom of Heaven.** (v.52) Through living faith the Holy Spirit brings from the treasure chambers of the kingdom of God both old and new. Faith and doctrine are the same as before, but it is always new and fresh. The law of the Spirit of life accomplishes this in Christ Jesus.

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