

Westover Baptist Church Virtual Sunday School Lesson

Lesson Text: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³¹ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

The Parable of the Yeast

³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

Three Parables

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Treasures New and Old

⁵¹ "Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes." ⁵² And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." (NRSV)

Reflection

The title of the lesson for today is “A Medley” by author Lori Walke, from our Connections Study Guide published by Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc. These parables prompt us to consider how we engage our spiritual imagination. What unrecognized or unacknowledged boundaries or limitations do we have when thinking about God’s vision for the world? How does our understanding need to expand?

A mustard seed is tiny. The mustard plant was considered a weed. No one would plant it; it was invasive and undesirable. This tiny seed becomes a mighty tree that provides shelter for birds. God came make something great and useful out of humble beginnings.

Yeast was considered a negative agent. In those days it was considered a corrupting element. The amount of flour used was enough to feed a large crowd. This is a reminder that the kingdom of heaven will permeate the world, just as the yeast has permeated the dough.

These parables could lead us to reflect on how the Christian movement’s expansion from a few people in a small area to a vast number living all over the world.

A man accidentally finds treasure. He responds with joy and sells everything he has to buy the field, which gives him the right to the treasure. This parable teaches that the kingdom of heaven can be found where and when we least expect it.

The merchant intentionally searches for something valuable. He finds an extremely valuable pearl. In a similar way, sometimes people find the kingdom of God while searching for meaning, hope, community, and other valuable things.

These parables speak to the full commitment required by discipleship. They call us to consider what we are willing to give up to follow Jesus and belong to God’s kingdom. Finding ourselves in God’s kingdom should bring us great joy. As you pray, ask God to show you things that are keeping you from practicing full discipleship.

In the parable of the net, we return to the theme of the final judgement like in the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The good and bad fish have been living and growing together until the time of separation arrives.

Jesus used “scribe” here in the sense of someone who is trained, has understanding, and can teach others. The phrase “every scribe” refers to the disciples, but it also refers to all of us. We need to be biblically literate. What steps can you take to be sure you know what the Bible teaches? Bible literacy reflects our commitment to following Jesus.

Reflect on your faith journey. Some have experienced spirituality in nontraditional ways. Can you identify any nontraditional spiritual treasures? Pray for discernment in identifying sound spiritual practices and insights. What might you add to or delete from your spiritual practices?