

Suggested Reading

This week you may wish to read the following passages from the Bible.

A Recommended Reading

Matthew 13:53 - 18:35

B Read Carefully

Matthew	18:1-35	<i>The Community Sermon</i>
Matthew	14:22-33	Walking on the Water
Matthew	15:21-28	Tyre & Sidon
Matthew	17:24-27	The Temple Tax

C Compare this section with:

*Matthew 16:13-23 = Mark 8:27-33 & Luke 9:18-22
Peter's profession of faith*

D Further Reading

The Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraphs 543-556, 880-887.

Prayer

PFP v6 2/2020

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Henley on Thames



The Parables of the Kingdom.

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Matthew 11:1 - 13:52



We can now trace the familiar structure within each section of Matthew's Gospel: a narrative section, followed by a discourse or sermon. Each sermon develops and enhances the themes which have already been introduced in each section of the Gospel.

Jesus has previously spoken about the rejection of the mission to Israel. Now the opposition begins. The narrative section is filled with questions, dispute stories, and controversies. There is a hardening of positions and a struggle between the belief and unbelief, which is expressed within the 'parable sermon' by its central exposition the '*Secret of the Kingdom.*'

The Parable Sermon occupies a central place within Matthew's Gospel. It is the key to one of Matthew's central themes, the Kingdom of Heaven. It also marks the moment when Jesus withdraws from the crowds which follow him, to devote his time to teaching his disciples. (*Mtt 13:36*)

The Parables:

A parable is the distinctive method of teaching which Jesus employed. The parables reflect the experience and location of the time. They are full of agricultural images which reflect Palestinian practices at the time of Jesus that would have been instantly recognisable to Jesus' audience.

The Parable of the Sower is the first of the parables in every sense. It is the key to understanding any of the parables. When Jesus explains this parable to his disciples, they will understand that the seed is the word of God which yields a rich harvest when it is planted in rich soil.

Matthew stresses the positive and optimistic vision within this parable: despite the seed which is lost, the harvest will be beyond what was sown. The parables emphasise faith, which is a significant theme within this section of his Gospel: A parable is mysterious: it fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah: '*you will listen ... but not understand, see ... but not perceive.*' (*Isa 6:9-10*)

The purpose of the parables is set forth in the 'difficult saying.' (*Mtt 13:10-15*.) The passage distinguishes between the disciples and others, 'those outside.' It is the listener who places himself in one category or the other by his response to the parables. If he refuses to believe, the parables become unintelligible.

In Matthew's Gospel this is closely related to the narrative section. The people of Israel question the message of Jesus. They demand a sign and the Pharisees plot to destroy him. There is a growing sense of confrontation. Jesus condemns their towns for their lack of faith which is contrasted with the Gentiles. This also fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah. (*Isa 42:1-4 which is the first of the suffering servant songs.*)

Jesus speaks to the people in parables *because* they have refused to understand his teaching because of their hardness of heart. However, the disciples have been given '*the secret of the kingdom.*' This is the high point in Matthew's Gospel. The disciples understand and believe and therefore, *The Seed of the Kingdom* will bear a rich harvest in the good soil of a believer.

Next Week

The Church: God's Kingdom on Earth.

In the next section of Matthew's Gospel, the breach between Jesus and Israel widens. Jesus transfers the authority to teach, from the Jewish leaders to Peter and the disciples. Against a background of increasing hostility, Jesus begins the threefold prophecy of his passion, death and resurrection.

This section has the familiar structure of narrative followed by the sermon. Our focus will be on those parts of the narrative that are particular to Matthew or prepare for the Sermon. One theme is the role of Peter. His confession of faith marks out his role as the leader of the disciples. The Walking on the Water also includes Peter. These passages may contrast the strengths and the weaknesses within Peter. This is true of the other disciples as well. They understand the prophecies of Jesus but their faith is immature and easily shaken.

The Sermon develops this theme. It is known as the 'Community Sermon.' It has been given this title because it refers particularly to the qualities the Church Community will need after the resurrection.

The connection between Christ and his Church are of central importance during this section. Common to this chapter are the care of the 'little one' or the child, as well as the necessary quality of forgiveness.

Parables

'We need to ask him again and again what he wants to say to us in each of the parables. The struggle to understand the parables is ever present throughout the history of the Church. ...'

We have, then, good grounds for interpreting all the parables as hidden and multilayered invitations to faith in Jesus as the kingdom of God in person'.

Ratzinger, Joseph, Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007) Pg 183-184. 188.

The Parables of Jesus Christ

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1. Lamp Under a Basket	5:14-16	4:21, 22	8:16, 17 11:33-36
2. A Wise Man Builds on Rock and a Foolish Man Builds on Sand	7:24-27		6:47-49
3. Unshrunken (New) Cloth on an Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
4. New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37, 38
5. The Sower	13:3-23	4:2-20	8:4-15
6. The Tares (Weeds)	13:24-30		
7. The Mustard Seed	13:31, 32	4:30-32	13:18, 19
8. The Leaven	13:33		13:20, 21
9. The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
10. The Pearl of Great Price	13:45, 46		
11. The Dragnet	13:47-50		
12. The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
13. The Unforgiving Servant	18:23-35		
14. The Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
15. The Two Sons	21:28-32		
16. The Wicked Vinedressers	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
17. The Wedding Feast	22:2-14		
18. The Fig Tree	24:32-44	13:28-32	21:29-33
19. The Wise and Foolish Virgins	25:1-13		
20. The Talents	25:14-30		
21. The Growing Seed	4:26-29		7:41-43
22. The Absent Householder	13:33-37		10:30-37
23. The Creditor and Two Debtors			11:5-13
24. The Good Samaritan			12:16-21
25. A Friend in Need			12:35-40
26. The Rich Fool			12:42-48
27. The Watchful Servants			13:6-9
28. The Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant			14:16-24
29. The Barren Fig Tree			14:25-35
30. The Great Supper			15:8-10
31. Building a Tower and a King Making War			15:11-32
32. The Lost Coin			16:1-13
33. The Lost Son			16:19-31
34. The Unjust Steward			17:7-10
35. The Rich Man and Lazarus			18:1-8
36. Unprofitable Servants			18:9-14
37. The Persistent Widow			19:11-27
38. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			
39. The Minas			

Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts © 1993 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

The Parable of the Darnel is unique to Matthew's Gospel. However, it shares the same theme as many of the parables in this section. The necessity of patience and openness to God's will. One must share the patience and tolerance of God who will allow the Darnel and the Wheat to grow together until the harvest. The parable of the Darnel has been interpreted in many ways: a contrast between the Synagogue and the Church, or the Church and the World, because it is at this point that Jesus withdraws with his disciples. His mission to Israel is now secondary to his instruction of the disciples.

This parable should not lead to the mistaken understanding that nothing can be done about evil in our midst, a response that may lead to passive indifference. However, while the point of the parable maybe that the kingdom is a mixed body of sinners and saints on earth, one should remember that weeds unchecked might choke the wheat. The Church needs constant reformation and positive action including the personal desire for holiness. This parable can also the imbalance within us. We seek to balance between the desire for repentance without recrimination of others. We need the patience to be open to God's desire to wait until the harvest while avoiding indifference.

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven also inspires the disciple to be patient and to discern the Kingdom of God. This may contrast with John the Baptist's message, and his need to see concrete evidence of reign of the Messiah.

The Parables of the Treasure, the Pearl, and the Dragnet remind us that the kingdom is such a priceless treasure that the wise would gladly give all they have for the opportunity to find Christ in our midst.

The Conclusion of the Parables, reminds us that the disciple is one who may gladly receive the 'Secret of the Kingdom.' The scribe is one who can draw together the teaching of Jesus in continuity with the teaching of the scriptures. This may be Matthew's description of himself, or that of an important office in this Jewish/Christian community.

The Sermon on the Mount reminded us that Jesus has come not to abolish the law but to fulfil it. Yet he has the authority to re-interpret it. *You have heard how it was said ... but I say to you...*

The scribe may be in the model of St Joseph who acted in accordance with the letter and spirit of the law and upheld its meaning and the compassion which he exercised. A disciple in this mould is one who possesses the secret of the kingdom and can live by this in his daily life.

ORDER FOR GOSPEL READING FOR SUNDAYS IN ORDINARY TIME

In order to do justice to the intention of the Lectionary, the five great 'sermons' in Matthew's Gospel will of necessity be the focal points of preaching and instruction. The narrative sections, which are placed in between the sermons, are composed in such a way that there is a unity and coherence in the whole work.

Unit I		The figure of Jesus the Messiah	Sundays 1-2
SUNDAY 1		The Baptism of Jesus	Mt 3:13-17
SUNDAY 2		The witness of John the Baptist	Jn 1:29-34
Unit II		Christ's design for life in God's Kingdom	Sundays 3-9
<i>Narrative:</i>			
SUNDAY 3		The call of the first disciples	Mt 4:12-23
<i>Discourse:</i>			
SUNDAY 4		The Sermon on the Mount (1)	Mt 5:1-12
SUNDAY 5		The Sermon on the Mount (2)	Mt 5:13-16
SUNDAY 6		The Sermon on the Mount (3)	Mt 5:17-37
SUNDAY 7		The Sermon on the Mount (4)	Mt 5:38-48
SUNDAY 8		The Sermon on the Mount (5)	Mt 6:24-34
SUNDAY 9		The Sermon on the Mount (6)	Mt 7:21-27
Unit III		The spread of God's Kingdom	Sundays 10-13
<i>Narrative:</i>			
SUNDAY 10		The call of Levi	Mt 9:9-13
<i>Discourse:</i>			
SUNDAY 11		The mission sermon (1)	Mt 9:36-10:8
SUNDAY 12		The mission sermon (2)	Mt 10:26-33
SUNDAY 13		The mission sermon (3)	Mt 10:37-42
Unit IV		The mystery of God's Kingdom	Sundays 14-17
<i>Narrative:</i>			
SUNDAY 14		The revelation to the simple	Mt 11:25-30
<i>Discourse:</i>			
SUNDAY 15		The parable sermon (1)	Mt 13:1-23
SUNDAY 16		The parable sermon (2)	Mt 13:24-43
SUNDAY 17		The parable sermon (3)	Mt 13:44-52

YEAR A: YEAR OF MATTHEW

Discourse and narrative stand side by side, so that the narrative chapters prepare the way for what follows in the discourses. Recognising the way in which the Lectionary has reflected the structure of Matthew's Gospel, will enable preachers and readers to see the context of the readings from one week to the next.

Unit V		God's kingdom on earth – The Church of Christ	Sundays 18-24
<i>Narrative:</i>			
SUNDAY 18		The feeding of five thousand	Mt 14:31-21
SUNDAY 19		Jesus walks on the waters	Mt 14:22-33
SUNDAY 20		The Canaanite woman	Mt 15:21-28
SUNDAY 21		Peter's confession: the primacy conferred	Mt 16:13-20
SUNDAY 22		The passion prophesied: discipleship	Mt 16:21-27
<i>Discourse:</i>			
SUNDAY 23		The community sermon (1)	Mt 18:15-20
SUNDAY 24		The community sermon (2)	Mt 18:21-35
Unit VI		Authority and invitation – the ministry ends	Sundays 25-33
<i>Narrative:</i>			
SUNDAY 25		The parable of the labourers	Mt 20:1-16
SUNDAY 26		The parable of the two sons	Mt 21:28-32
SUNDAY 27		The parable of the wicked vinedressers	Mt 21:33-43
SUNDAY 28		The parable of the marriage feast	Mt 22:1-14
SUNDAY 29		Paying tribute to Caesar	Mt 22:15-21
SUNDAY 30		The greatest commandment	Mt 22:34-40
SUNDAY 31		Hypocrisy and ambition	Mt 23:1-12
<i>Discourse:</i>			
SUNDAY 32		The final sermon (1)	Mt 25:1-13
SUNDAY 33		The final sermon (2)	Mt 25:14-30
Unit VII		God's Kingdom fulfilled	Sunday 34
SUNDAY 34		Christ the King	Mt 25:31-46