

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Presbyterian Church, 10  
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3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS**

**LESSON 13**

**THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

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**INTRODUCTION**

One of Jesus' methods of teaching was the use of parables. The word "parable" is from the Greek word, *parabole*, which means "a placing of things side by side". Its purpose is for comparison. The literal method

of interpretation could include figurative sayings such as parables, similes allegories and metaphors. A parable proper is a short and simple story from which some teaching points can be derived. In short, it is an extended simile. An extended metaphor is an allegory. A Bible scholar defines thus: "A parable is a comparison drawn from nature or daily life and designed to illuminate some spiritual truth, on the assumption that what is valid in one sphere is valid also in the other."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus used parables to great effect. The short, simple and realistic portrayal of life and nature does not fail to make a lasting impression in the minds and hearts of the hearers. While the literal meaning is plain, the spiritual meaning is only discernible to those who have ears to hear.

In this lesson, eight of Jesus' parables are considered. They fall into four pairs: the Sower and the Seed; the Tares and the Wheat; the Leaven and the Mustard Seed; and the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price. Each illustrates some aspects of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**UNDERSTANDING**

***Parable of the Sower***

*Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-25,  
Luke 8:4-18*

The first parable was that of a sower who sowed his seeds which fell into four kinds of soil.

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<sup>1</sup> Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, volume II, s.v. "Parable" by Walter W. Wessel.

Some seeds fell first by the wayside, some on stony places with shallow ground, some on thorny ground, and some on good ground. When Jesus was alone with the Twelve, they asked Him for the meaning of the parable. Jesus remarked that His disciples would be given to know the mysteries [God's truth hidden to be revealed in His time] of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus then began to interpret the parable to the Twelve. In His preaching, Jesus saw the multitude listening to Him. He perceived in His audience that each person was of a different character with differing motives in wanting to hear Jesus. There were those who were ever ready to criticize Him like the Pharisees and scribes. Others came to hear Him out of curiosity, and there are those who came to hear the Word of God.

There were the "wayside" hearers. Like the wayside where the ground was hardened, the heart of these hearers was impervious to the seeds of the Word of God that fell on it. These hearers did not take the Word of God into their heart because they did not understand. And subsequently Satan through his agents with all kinds of means would snatch the Word away from them.

A second group was the "stony places" hearers where the ground was shallow. These hearers had no depth and root, and because their roots remain on the surface of the ground the heat of the sun destroys them when the sun came up. These hearers were superficial and emotional. They received the

Word immediately but because they did not seriously continue to study and be rooted in the Word, they fell away when persecutions and troubles came their way. These hearers wanted to enter a kingdom of heaven not by suffering. These would include the health and wealth gospel preachers and followers today. It must be according to their will and not the will of God. The Bible is clear on this matter. **Philippians 1:29**, "*For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*"

A third group was the "thorny ground" hearers. They heard the Word, and received it with joy. They lasted for some time until the cares and the riches of life in this world choke and deceive them, so much so that they give no evidence of spiritual growth and maturity. In short, these hearers seem to want to serve God and mammon. This is the more dangerous of the two. The subtle dangers of the temptations of this world are harder to discern than the direct onslaught of persecutions. When the early church was persecuted, the church was pure and strong. When Constantine made Christianity the state religion, Christianity took on a noble façade and the decline of Christianity sets in. A period of dark ages ensued till the time of the sixteenth Century Reformation of Martin Luther.

Lastly, there were the "good soil" hearers. They heard the Word. The Word of God takes root and bear fruit in their lives. They became transformed by the Word. When they heard the

Word, they understood, received and kept the Word in their heart, and with patience and fortitude, they showed much evidence of godly living.

### ***Parable of the Tares***

*Matthew 13:24-30*

Jesus told His hearers another parable alongside the first parable of the Sower. Although it has some similarities with the first, its differences are significant. Jesus identified the sower of the seed as the Son of man, who is none other than God Himself. The field was the world. The good seeds were the children of the Kingdom of Heaven. The tares were the children of the devil, and the enemy in the parable who sowed the bad seed was the Devil. The harvest was the end of the world and the reapers were the angels. At the end, the Son of man would send His angels to gather the children of the kingdom who would shine forth as the sun, whereas the children of the Devil would be cast into the “furnace of fire” where there would be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This parable teaches about the end of the world or age. It indicates that in the world, there are true children of the Kingdom of Heaven and there are false children who look like but are not genuinely the children of the Kingdom. These “wheat” Christians and the “tares” Christians are allowed to be mixed in the world for the time being. The “harvest” which is the end of the world will happen at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This parable warns us against judging others and

tries to find out if he or she is born again or not. God will deal with this judgement on the last day. Not even angels are allowed to make this judgement now. But when the Day comes, there will be no mistake.

### ***Parable of the Harvest***

*Mark 4:26-29*

This parable is also known as the Parable of the Seed Growing. The seed was sown and the sower went to sleep day and night, patiently waiting. The growth of the seed and the eventual bearing of fruit depended on the soil. The essence of this parable is clear. The seed of the Word is sown in the field (the world) and the growth of the Kingdom will go through the natural process and in gradual stages. The sower had to learn to be patient, dependent and have faith. Salvation of the LORD is mysterious and man must wait for the LORD to do His work.

### ***Parable of the Mustard Seed***

*Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32*

Alongside the parable of the growing seed, Jesus taught another, the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The mustard seed is native to the country of Palestine. It is so small that it could be blown away by one’s breath when it is brought near the face to see. In contrast to its seed is the tree, which will grow to a big tree (about twelve feet) shooting out its branches. The mention of birds lodging in the branches helps us to understand how great the tree is. It is a follow up of the parable of the growing seed. The Kingdom of

Heaven would begin small (a group of disciples) and grow gradually to become a universal rule at the Second Coming of its King, the Lord Jesus Christ. The emphasis is on the SIZE.

### ***Parable of the Leaven***

Matthew 13:33-43, Mark 4:33-34

Jesus spoke another parable—the Parable of the Leaven. Often in the Bible, leaven is used to symbolize sin. But here “leaven” is used in a good sense. A woman used leaven to cause the dough to rise. The leaven works by being mixed into the dough. The spiritual significance of this parable is that the kingdom people must mingle in the world. They have to be real, vital and active in order to be an effective spiritual influence to the unbelieving world to produce spiritual change. Hence, wherever the leaven of the Kingdom is put, a mighty transformation would happen. The influence of the Word of God will be thorough and complete. This is the only instance in the whole Bible where the leaven is used in the good sense. The emphasis is on the EXTENT.

### ***Parable of the Hidden Treasure***

Matthew 13:44

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure is about a man, when he had found a treasure hidden in a field, sold all that he had, and bought the field. This parable illustrates the supreme value and preciousness of the Kingdom of Heaven. The man having known the value of the treasure sold all that he had. Indeed Jesus demanded nothing

less than the denial of self to everyone who seeks Him. We cannot hold anything back from God when we ask Him to be our Saviour and Lord.

### ***Parable of the Pearl of Great Price***

Matthew 13:45-46

This parable is a parallel of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure. Once again, the merchant found a pearl of matchless beauty and value, and he went and sold all that he had to buy this pearl. The value of the kingdom is revealed in these two twin parables. It should stir the minds and hearts of people when they have heard the gospel seed of the kingdom to sacrifice all in order to possess the kingdom. Any person who has rightly recognized the treasure and preciousness of the kingdom will welcome this new found wealth and prosperity. Christians must not sell the gospel short by trying to make it more palatable for the sinner. The pearl of great price is the best and only pearl. Do not tarnish it by our lack of faith and sin. A sinner is not doing God a favour when he accepts the Gospel.

### ***Parable of the Good and Bad Fishes***

Matthew 13:47-50

The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a net that had been cast out into the sea. When it was full, it was drawn to shore and there were all kinds of fishes in the net. The good fishes were gathered but the bad fishes were thrown away. Jesus interpreted the parable as an illustration of what would happen at the end of

the world. The angels would come forth, and separate the wicked from the righteous. The angels then would cast the wicked into the furnace of fire. This is a prophetic scene of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when unbelievers will be separated from believers, and the unbelievers will be judged at the Judgement of the Great White Throne at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:11-15). This parable reveals that no one will escape God's judgement and that His judgement will be perfect.

***Understanding the Parables***  
Matthew 13:51-53.

The disciples did not understand the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Tares. They asked Jesus who then explained to them. Biblical parables are not easily understood by unbelievers. But believers who are born-again and have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them have the capacity to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God. To those who walk in fear of God and obey His commandments, He gave them the ability to understand. Jesus said here that "every scribe", every one who is a diligent student of the Word of God like a scribe, must be able to relate these new truths to the old. When they properly understand the new, it will have a true picture of the King and His Kingdom as found in the Old Testament. But they must be so instructed. Jesus would instruct them. He would focus His attention on these disciples to enable them to do so.

When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there.

**SUMMARY**

The meaning of the Parable of the Sower is plain. The message of the kingdom of God is to be preached to the people. The message, which is the seed, is always the same. The difference is that the hearts of the hearers (the soil) are not the same. And those who are hearers and doers of the Word are the ones that bear fruit of repentance and good works. In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, born-again Christians and so-called professing Christians are found in the world. In the Parable of the Seed Growing, the teaching is clear and simple. Christians are called to do their role in diligently preaching the Word, and to learn to be patient and have faith in God who gives the increase. We should not be impatient if we have done our duty.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed promises that the Kingdom will become great at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks of the size of God's kingdom. The Parable of the Leaven has similar meaning with the parable of the mustard seed. This speaks of the extent of the influence of God's kingdom, it will be total and complete.

The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price are twin parables. They show that the Kingdom is of great value and is priceless. The Kingdom is worthy of every Christian to make all sacrifices in

order to enter in through Christ Jesus and advance it. There is no other way. Lastly, the Parable of the Good and Bad Fishes pictured the end of this age when Christians and non-Christians will be eternally separated. This will happen at the *Parousia*, the visible and bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth!

**PRACTICAL VALUE**

The gospel is not for a select few. It is to be preached to the world. As Christians, our mission is to faithfully proclaim the gospel message. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. Christians working in the local church should not be too worried about increasing the number of worshippers or attendance of their church. The parables teach Christians to be patient and dependent on God who is the One who gives the increase. Christians however must do their God appointed duty of faithfully and fervently sowing the seed of the Word of God. God has not revealed in its entirety the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. But God has been encouraging us by way of illustration that the Kingdom is worthy of all the sacrifices that we can make. We should believe, and like Paul, offer our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, holy acceptable, which is our reasonable service. Let us spend and be spent (not be burnt-out) for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great joy to serve the Lord for He said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. AMEN.

**DHW Bible Class**

**LESSON 13**

**THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-25, Luke 8:4-18.**

**TUESDAY: Matthew 13:24-30 36-43.**

**WEDNESDAY: Mark 4:26-29; Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32.**

**THURSDAY: Matthew 13:33-46; Mark 4:33-34.**

**FRIDAY: Matthew 13:47-50 Matthew 13:51-53.**

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What happened to the seed sown on each of the four soils?**

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**2. What was Jesus' interpretation of each of the four soils, which received the seed?**

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**3. What is the main thrust of the Parable of the Sower?**

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**7. What is the main point of the Parable of the Mustard Seed; and what does it teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**4. What is the main point of the Parable of the Tares?**

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**8. What is the main point of the Parable of the Leaven, and what does it teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**5. What truth does the Parable of the Tares teach?**

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**9. What is the main point of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure, and what does it teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**6. What is the main point of the Parable of the Harvest, and what does it teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**10. What is the main point of the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, and what does it teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**11. What is the main point of the Parable of the Good and Bad Fishes, and what does the parable teach about the Kingdom of Heaven?**

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**12. What have you learned about these parables of the Kingdom of Heaven to shape your life?**

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