

Take Heed How You Hear

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon encourages believers to be diligent and receptive in hearing God's word to experience spiritual growth and revelation.

Duration: 56:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 13:3-9, Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:21, Mark 4:28, Luke 8:5-8, Luke 11:33

Topics: "Gospel Power", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of spreading the word of God. He shares how thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ through the ministry and teaching of Pastor Chuck. The speaker highlights the parable of the sower, explaining that God wants to reveal his truth to us and encourages us to seek it out. He also emphasizes the power of the Gospel, stating that if we can just get the Gospel to people, we can trust the Lord to bring about salvation.

Transcript

Lord, we pray now as we open your word once again, we pray for you to come by your spirit and Lord to speak to us tonight. Lord, we want to hear from you. We want to grow and learn and Lord, we want to be more the people that you desire us to be.

And so through your spirit, take your word and work your work deep in our hearts tonight, we pray. And we pray it in the name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

As we come tonight to verse 21, remember the setting here. Jesus is actually sitting in a boat and he's surrounded by a large crowd of people and he's speaking to them, he's teaching them and he's speaking to them now at this point in parables. And we pointed out how he was speaking in parables really as a means of judgment in a sense because they had at this point rejected the clear presentation of his message and they had attributed his miraculous power to Satan.

And so as sort of a judicial act against them, Jesus now begins to speak in parables and to a certain extent to veil the truth from them because of their persistent unwillingness to receive his word. And so the parables that Mark records for us are some of them exactly the same parables that Luke and Matthew record, but each of the gospel writers do have some variation in the parables that they record. All three, Matthew, Mark and Luke record the parable of the sower that we considered last week.

But then from the parable of the sower, they kind of go off in different directions and Mark does as well. So as we pick up in Mark's account in verse 21, also he said to them, so here's the second parable, is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed. Is it not to be set on a lamp stand? Now, an interesting thing just to point out to you is when you read through Matthew and Luke's accounts, you're going to find a very similar use of language, but not necessarily the same thing being said.

And it appears that Jesus would use similar kinds of language, but he would mix it up at times. He wouldn't always be communicating the exact same thing, even though he was using similar types of language. And that's important to understand if you're a Bible student, because when you're reading through, you're going to find that in one place he speaks of, as he does here, the lamp and the basket and, you know, being put under a bed and so forth.

But when you read it in one gospel, it seems to mean something different. And some people have made the mistake of thinking that somehow Jesus got confused or the authors of the gospels got confused and they mixed up his words. But the reality is Jesus said different things.

He didn't say the same thing over and over again, although he did use the same metaphors at times. And so you'll find in the other two gospels, and notice I'm just referring to two, but of course, the gospel of John is also part of the four books that make up the gospels. Yet John is so much different than the others that his gospel sort of stands alone.

The three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to, I don't know if I mentioned this before, but they're commonly referred to as the synoptic. And the word synoptic means to be seen from a similar point of view. And so each of these gospels, as you read them, there are some similarities, but the more you read them, the more you discover that there are some real differences as well, which aren't always noticed right on the surface.

And so they, you know, as I said, they mentioned the lamp and the basket and all of that, but it's a different context. So Jesus, he puts this forth, speaking of a lamp brought to be put under a basket or a bed. No, of course not.

A lamp rather is to be set on a lamp stand for there is nothing hidden, which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret, but that it should come to light. And then he said, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Now the question is, what does this parable mean? What was the purpose? What is Jesus wanting to communicate through this parable? And if you look at it and spend some time considering it, it becomes clear that what Jesus is doing here is he is encouraging people through this parable to seek out the truth of God.

And so the lamp is a picture of God's truth and God's truth was not sent forth to be somehow then, you know, hidden, but rather God wants to reveal his truth. And that's why he says in verse 22, for there is nothing hidden, which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret. But that it should come to light.

So really the parable is an encouragement to seek out the truth of God. Jesus is telling us God wants to reveal truth to us. That is exciting to me.

That's encouraging to know that the Lord himself is wanting to reveal things to us from his word. You know, a lot of times we're encouraging people to get in the Bible, read your Bible, study your Bible, we

say. And sometimes we can almost sort of develop the mentality as Christians that, you know, the Bible is somewhat of a burden.

It's a bit laborious. You know, we have to read this thing all the time. And when we think of it like a duty, like something that we've got to do or else.

But in actuality, the reason we ought to be reading the Bible is because God wants to meet us and have a conversation with us. And he wants to reveal himself to us through the pages of scripture. And that's what Jesus is encouraging us to do here.

He's encouraging us to seek out the truth because just like you don't buy a lamp and then stick it in a place where the light isn't going to be able to benefit anybody. So with God, he hasn't sent his truth into the world to keep it hidden from men, but he sent his truth into the world so that we might know it. But here's the key.

Let him who has ears to hear hear. That's really the issue right there. Do we have ears to hear? Are we open? Are we listening? Do we want to know the truth of the word of God? If we do, we've got the promise that it will be revealed to us.

Now, he then went on to say to them. Now, listen to this. This is sort of an addition to what he's already said.

He said, take heed how you hear. That's the idea of being communicated. My translation reads, take heed what you hear.

But I think a better way to translate it is take heed how you hear. You see what Jesus is wanting us to do is to again be receptive to the word. So listen to what he says.

He says, take heed how you hear for with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you and to you who hear more will be given. Now, here's what he's telling us. This is what he's getting at here.

What he's getting at is this revelation depends on receptivity. You see, God reveals things to people who receive what he reveals. And the more you receive, the more God reveals.

The greater your receptivity, the greater the revelation is going to be. In other words, as you embrace what God is showing you, as you receive it, as you appropriate it, as you make it part of your life, as you embrace it, what you're doing is actually opening yourself up for more and more revelation. Maybe you're going through a dry time, as we sometimes refer to it, maybe you're struggling, maybe you're not getting anything out of the word, so to speak.

And maybe it's because you haven't really done much with what you've received already. And it's not until you take what you've already received and really apply that, that you're going to, you know, sort of pave the way for greater revelation to come or a greater understanding or comprehension of the word of God. Let me quote to you from J.C. Ryle, one of the great commentators on this particular passage here.

He says this, he says, to the degree which a believer attains in grace or excuse me, the degree to which a believer attains in grace is ever set before us as closely connected with his own diligence in the use of means and his own faithfulness in living fully up to the light and knowledge which he possesses. Indolence and laziness are always discouraged in God's word. Now listen, labor and pains in hearing, reading, and

prayer are always represented as bringing their own reward.

And then he quotes from the Proverbs, the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. An idle soul shall suffer hunger. Attention to this great principle is the main secret of spiritual prosperity.

The man who makes rapid progress in spiritual attainments who grows visibly in grace and knowledge and strength and usefulness will always be found to be a diligent man. He leaves no stone unturned to promote his soul's well-doing. He is diligent over his Bible, diligent in his private devotions, diligent as a hearer of sermons, diligent in his attendance at the Lord's table, and he reaps according as he sows.

Just as the muscles of the body are strengthened by regular exercise, so are the graces of the soul increased by diligence in using them. I thought that was very appropriate, very relevant, powerful. The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Is our leanness of soul perhaps the result of our careless approach to spiritual things? Maybe is it that we're not pursuing the things of God as diligently as we perhaps ought to be? You know, we have to ask ourselves these questions, and we do have to analyze our lives in light of God's truth. And there are times when we have to just face the facts that, you know, I haven't really been as diligent as I ought to be. And that's why I'm feeling famished spiritually.

That's why I'm dry. That's why there seems to be no nearness of God or no sense of fresh revelation coming from him because I haven't really been attending to my soul. All the things that we so often preoccupy ourselves with, you know, it's amazing.

The things that we can get caught up in and overtaken by, things that really don't profit us at all. And we go off on these detours for some time and, you know, finally we come to our senses and we think, what am I doing? Where am I at? And we're dried up and withering spiritually. And the Lord in his grace, of course, calls us back and we come back and we get refreshed once again.

And then we think to ourselves, why did I ever leave this in the first place? But it happens to us. But we need to be diligent. We need to take heed how we hear.

We need to hear with the intent of receiving, responding to, obeying what God speaks to us. Because it's when I do that, that I open myself up for a greater work of God in my life. You know, I think there are lots and lots of people in Orange County.

Thousands, I would imagine. Thousands and thousands who have made a commitment at one time or another to the Lord Jesus Christ. Who have been to a church, who have been to an evangelistic campaign, who have perhaps gone to Bible study, or, you know, something of that nature.

And yet, not really followed through, not really taken heed to the word of God. And not progressing, not growing, not developing, not bearing the kind of fruit that God desires. And oh, how we need to beware that we are not among that group of people.

We need to receive the word of God and we need to embrace it. Because with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. You see, as you embrace the word and as you make it part of your life and as you use it in the sense of letting it speak to you and change you and lead you and all those things, you just open yourself up for more and more and more to be poured upon you.

But if you don't receive it in that way, then you actually close the door for greater revelation to come. And so Jesus said, for whoever has to him, more will be given. But whoever does not have even what he has will be taken away from him.

So for the person who has and receives, they get more. For the person who doesn't have that desire, that hunger, that passion, they end up with nothing. But yet, not because the Lord didn't want to give them something, but because obviously they were disinterested themselves and they end up depriving themselves of the goodness and the blessing of God.

I want to be made fat. My soul. I'm trying to not be fat physically, but that's not working too well.

But the one area I do want to be fat in is my soul. I want to be spiritually fat. And the soul of the diligent.

As we take heed. And I like what J.C. Ryle said here when he spoke of the person being diligent over his Bible, diligent in private devotions, diligent as a hearer of sermons, diligent in his attendance at the Lord's table. You know, again, it just we come back to that same picture again of a person whose life is taken up with the things of God.

And as David said in the first Psalm, that's the blessed person. Oh, how blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord. And in his law, he does meditate day and night.

For he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaves shall never wither, who bring forth fruit in his season. Whatever he does will prosper. That's the picture that is potentially each and every one of us.

If we do that one simple thing, become people who delight in his word. But being diligent over his Bible, diligent in private devotions, you know, taking the time to be with the Lord and to connect with him on a daily basis. I know we all live hectic lives.

Believe me, I live a hectic life. And my whole life is taken up with the ministry. But yet I find that many times I'm so encumbered by ministry that I miss out on those precious times of communion with the Lord.

And I find myself suffering as a result of it. I find myself being wearied and I find myself feeling like I'm drying up and withering. But all it takes is just to renew that fellowship and to just take the time to get alone and be with the Lord.

And I have found that the Lord is so faithful that the moment you turn in that direction, he's right there to meet you. You know, he doesn't stand aloof because you haven't been around for a while. He's going to show you two can play this game.

And then as you go to seek him, he's nowhere to be found. That's not the case. But the Lord, as the loving heavenly father that he is, the moment we are turning in that direction, he's right there to embrace us and to receive us and to bless us.

Being diligent in the hearing of sermons, wanting to hear the word of God and wanting to know more about the Lord. You know, there's so much to know. There's so much to learn in all of our lives.

If we spend our whole life just doing nothing but studying this book, we still wouldn't know the half of it. When we come to the end of our lives, because there's so much it's its unsearchable, it's immeasurable, the depth of it. Oh, the wisdom, both of the riches and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his

judgments and his ways beyond our finding out? You know, sometimes we might tend to think, well, you know, I don't want to go overboard.

I don't want to learn everything so quickly that I'll become bored in the future with nothing else to do. You never will. Don't worry.

You can just keep going. It's unfathomable. You can't ever get to the bottom of it.

And I know that. And some of you know that as well by experience. But I can think of times where, you know, I've read something, I've I've studied it thoroughly, I've taught it.

And then I come back to it sometimes later and read it again. And it seems as though I've never even read it before. It's there's fresh understanding and insight and revelation.

And it's such a wonderful thing. So take heed how you hear. Revelation depends on receptivity.

You want more of the Lord. You want to hear more from him. You want to understand the ways of God in a greater way than receive what he imparts to you and just make it yours personally.

And you'll find that more and more revelation will come as time passes. And he said, the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground and should sleep by night and rise by day. And the seed should sprout and grow.

He himself does not know how for the earth yields crops by itself. First, the blade, then the head. After that, the full grain in the head.

But when the grain ripens immediately, he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come. So once again, Jesus speaks another parable to them. I think the gist of this parable here is that the life is contained in the seed itself.

I think we talked about this before. But remember, the seed is a picture of the word of God. And as a seed contains the life of the plant that it comes from.

So the word of God contains the life of God. But to me, that's such a wonderful thing to know that the life is in the word. And really, the goal of us Christians is to just get the word into our own lives.

And as much as we have opportunity to get the word into the lives of other people. And then guess what? The word does the work itself. God does the work because the life is in the seed.

You know, how many times have we attempted to get the word to people? And we've done that. But yet afterward, we're stressed and we're worried and we're frustrated or depressed because we feel like, oh, I didn't, you know, I wasn't able to, you know, really impact that person's life or I wasn't able to, you know, reap of a harvest. I wasn't able to get them to surrender their life to the Lord and make a commitment.

And, you know, we walk away maybe feeling like we failed. But you know what? Here's the reality. If we got the word to people, then we didn't fail at all.

Because that's all we're really supposed to do. You see, I can't produce the life of God in somebody. Neither can you.

That's the work of God. Sometimes people will come and say, hey, man, you saved me. Yeah, years ago, I came to your church and you saved me.

And you know what they mean. But that terminology, you know, the reality is, no, I didn't save you. If I saved you, you're in big, big trouble.

Actually, if I saved you, you're not saved because I can't save anybody. But I know what they're saying. They're looking at you as an instrument.

But what has happened really is God has saved them. God does that. And how does he do it? He does it by planting his word in somebody's life.

And as we consider the parable of the sower, when that seed falls upon the good ground, it brings forth fruit. So instead of, as we often do, sort of bearing this great burden of having to, you know, make people believe or forcing people to receive what we need to do is really just seek to get the message out to people. Paul spoke of the gospel in Romans 1 16.

He said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes the gospel itself is the power of God. So that means if I can just get the gospel to people, I can trust the Lord to take it from there. And that's really the picture that we have in scripture.

You know, nowhere in scripture are we told to force somebody into the kingdom, to get them in a full Nelson and get them to cry uncle, to get them to say, I repent. But sometimes we find ourselves doing that, don't we? And if even if we're not trying to force someone in, we're sort of feeling like we're supposed to do that. No, that's not what we're supposed to do.

When we were doing a lot of outreach on the streets, when we were living overseas, we would go out and I never had any sense that we were supposed to, you know, go out and force people into praying with us to receive Christ. What I did feel greatly compelled to do is just go get the word out to people. And it was a wonderful experience because we were free to just scatter the seed and let the Lord take it from there.

And we would go into places where people would be passing through that we're really, you know, visiting from all over the world. And, and so many times I would think of how, how glorious this is that as people are passing through this area right here, they're stopping. And for 15 minutes, they're hearing something they've never heard in their lives.

They're hearing the gospel. And what we're doing is we're planting seeds and they're going back home to their city. They're going perhaps back to their country.

And they're going back with that seed having been scattered. And now God can take that and he can work through that. That is so exciting.

And that's the message that I think Jesus is wanting to communicate in this particular parable, that the life is in the word and this is encouragement to the sower. It's encouraging. Just get the word out.

And so get the word out. Let's get it out. Let's just look for those opportunities to share with people and, and don't feel the great pressure that you've got to, you know, okay, now I've done this and now I've got to get a decision from them.

If the Lord leads that way and they're, they're at that place and they're ready. And we can certainly, if a conversation would go that far, we could certainly present that to them. But yet we don't have to push that.

I am personally really convinced about the sovereignty of God in the area of salvation. You know, sometimes people give the impression that, you know, maybe somebody is going to end up being lost because you missed the opportunity to, you know, sort of close the deal, so to speak. You know, maybe you shared with them and, and they were there on the verge of wanting to accept Christ, but, but you just, you suddenly got, you know, a bit overwhelmed and you dropped the ball and they got away and you didn't lead them in the sinner's prayer.

And then on their way home, they got hit by a car and they're dead and you didn't get them to heaven. They missed it by that much. I don't believe in that sort of thing.

You think God is going to bring somebody to that point. And then because you dropped the ball, they're not going to be able to get to heaven. That'd be pretty pathetic.

Wouldn't it? They show up there at the heavenly gates and the Lord says, Oh, you know what we, we actually, look, we, we, we were getting ready for you to come, but, you know, right at the last moment, my, my servant down there, he just blew it. And you, you know, you didn't get that prayer in. So now that's not going to happen.

But, but sometimes I, I hear people say things that sort of give that kind of impression. And sometimes, you know, I think in an attempt to motivate people to get out and share the gospel, sometimes people have said, look, you know, they're, they're bloods on your hands. You got to get out there.

And if you don't get people saved, then you're responsible for their eternal destiny. And I don't, I don't see it that way. I don't think the scriptures present it that way.

Not to say that we shouldn't be motivated to get out and share the Lord with people and take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way to do so. We definitely should do that. And sometimes we need to be provoked a bit, don't we? Sometimes we can just grow a bit complacent and sort of hardened and, you know, not really caring about others.

We need to be provoked at times, but not through a false view. We need to be provoked by the reality of the love of Christ. God loves these people and he wants to save them and they do need to hear.

And God has chosen not to use angels or some other mystical means. God has chosen to use you and to use me to get the message to other people. And so we do want to be faithful, diligent, and responsible in that area.

But at the end of the day, it's the Lord who does the saving. It's the word that contains the life. So we get the word out to people, you know, just thinking about this, all of a sudden, you know, what comes to my mind is the ministry here and Pastor Chuck.

You know, sometimes we talk about the, um, the evangelist of our day. And we, we just mentioned the Billy Graham crusade this week. And of course, Billy Graham is world renowned as an evangelist and he indeed is.

And he has obviously been used by God powerfully to lead many people to Christ. And we talk about someone even closer to home to most of us, and that would be Greg Laurie. And Greg certainly is gifted as an evangelist and God's used him very wonderfully and powerfully to lead many to Christ.

But you know, the interesting thing is Pastor Chuck, even though he doesn't have that identity as an evangelist, you can't imagine how many people around the world would attribute their coming to Christ to the ministry of Pastor Chuck. But yet, if you've come to this church, and especially if you've come on Sunday mornings for years, I personally have never seen in 20 something years of being around here, I've been in and out, but I've never seen Pastor Chuck give what we might call an altar, an altar call, or that sort of an invitation where, you know, you typically have an evangelistic service, bow your head, close your eyes, raise your hand, come forward. I've never seen Pastor Chuck do that on a Sunday morning ever.

But I know for a fact, thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ through this ministry, through Pastor Chuck's teaching on a Sunday, because the word was going out. The word has been faithfully spread. The seeds have been scattered and planted and God is faithful.

So that's the long version of saying, get the word out and know that the word will do the work. That's what Jesus wanted us to know in this parable here. But just before we move on from it, a couple of other comments on verse 28.

For the earth yields crops by itself, first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. And you know what I think the Lord's reminding us of here is that God works in our lives and he works through process. First, the seed falls upon the heart and then the blade shoots forth.

There's the life, that new life, but it's just a blade. But then the head, and then eventually the full grain. And that's what happens with all of us.

You know, you're not super Christian overnight. It just doesn't happen that way. You're not born again and then instantly the mature man or woman of God that you were always intended to be.

We all start the same way as just a little blade popping up. But then as we yield ourselves to that work of the Spirit through the word, that blade develops and it grows and it becomes then the head. And then as time goes on, the full grain in the head.

But when the grain ripens, immediately puts in the sickle because the harvest has come. And so there's that process. And we're all coming along in that process.

Some of us have known the Lord for quite some time and have walked with him and have grown. And some are in the process of doing that. Some are just getting started.

We need to take all those things into consideration as we fellowship with each other and pray for each other and all of that. And so verse 30, then he said, to what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed, which when it is sown on the ground is smaller than all the seeds on earth. But when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs and shoots out large branches so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.

Now, there's a few things to consider as we look at this parable. First of all, let me say this. This parable has been seized upon by the critics, the skeptics, the atheist as proof positive that Jesus could not have

possibly been God in the flesh because he didn't know what he was talking about in the area of botany.

Jesus made a major blunder here, they say. He said that the mustard seed was the smallest seed in the world. That's what they say.

Well, that's not what Jesus said. If we look at the other parables, which of course, the parable of the mustard seed, like the parable of the sower, is recorded in Matthew and Luke, as we pointed out earlier. And there's some elaboration, additional things that are stated by the other gospel writers that aren't stated clearly here.

But Jesus specifically said, as recorded by Matthew, that the mustard seed was the seed that a man would take and plant in his field. Now, you see, Jesus was not talking about all of the seeds on the planet. Jesus was talking about the seeds in the context of what everybody would have known at that time.

They were not living in some other part of the world where they might have had a smaller seed. They were living right there in the land of Israel. And to the Israeli farmer at that time in that place that they would live and die in, they weren't going to go on any agricultural retreats to the other side of the globe.

In that place at that time, that seed was indeed the smallest of seeds. You see, we have to look at things with common sense as well. Jesus isn't talking about all of the seeds in the world.

That's not his purpose or point here. He's not giving a botanical lecture, but he's using something to communicate a heavenly truth to these people. And he's speaking in terms that they would understand.

And yes, to them, the black mustard seed was the smallest of seeds to them in their environment, in their cultural and historical context. So no problem whatsoever. They then go on to say, these skeptics and critics and atheists, they then go on to say, oh, well, Jesus really was off in his understanding of these things because there is no mustard mustard plant that grows into a tree that could house birds.

Because Jesus goes on to talk about the fact that the birds lodged in the branches. But once again, they're wrong. In the land of Israel, there are mustard seeds that can grow to 10 feet in height.

Now I've got two foot bushes in my front yard that birds lodge in. Of course, birds can lodge in a 10 foot tree or an eight foot tree or a six foot tree. So these attempts, you know, with the critic, with the skeptic, they're always grasping at straws.

They're always looking for some area to criticize and to say, oh, look, Jesus, he, you know, he couldn't have been the son of God. He couldn't have been the God man. He's, you know, he's off in his understanding of these kinds of things.

Not so. Jesus was completely accurate in what he said. Now, having addressed that, we look at this parable and notice Jesus.

He's giving us a picture of the kingdom. To what shall we like in the kingdom of God? Now, the kingdom of God is not necessarily a reference to what we're thinking of. Sometimes when we think of the kingdom of God, we're thinking about heaven.

We're thinking about when we leave here and and go to heaven, we are then entering the kingdom of God. But in actuality, the kingdom of God came to us in the person of Jesus. And the moment we enter into a relationship with Christ, we at that moment enter the kingdom of God.

And so when Jesus was talking about the kingdom of God, he's not talking about heaven only in the future. He's talking about everything from the moment a person. Well, he's talking about everything from the moment of his arrival until heaven and the experience that people would have the moment they receive him until they go to heaven.

So he's talking about this long period of time known as the church age that's been going on about 2000 years now. So he says, this is what it's going to be like. I want to picture it for you.

It's like a mustard seed. Now, there are two different. Interpretations to this, basically.

There's sort of the traditional interpretation that is based on just, I think, a simple reading of the parable, the interpretation, the essence of it being simply this, that the kingdom of God will have a very small beginning. But in the end, it will become something very great and glorious. And it will become a place where creation itself will find a habitation.

And to many people, that is the interpretation of it. And if you look at things from the historical standpoint, that certainly does seem to fit. Because after all, we here tonight in 2003.

Living centuries later and thousands of miles away from its beginning, it's very humble beginning. We are part of the kingdom of God. And we're just a very small part of it.

And that little mustard seed evidenced in the lives of those few men and women who follow Jesus Christ has indeed become this vast, glorious kingdom that has expanded all over the world and has brought in every kind of person. And so that is possibly what Jesus was talking about. But there are others who look at this parable and they see something a bit different in it.

They see something even a bit more sinister in it. And what they see is that this is indeed a picture of the kingdom of God in its manifestation here on earth. But it's not a glorious picture, necessarily.

It's not a pleasant picture. Because although it did have a very small beginning, it grew into something that it was never intended to be. It became a monstrosity.

And it would be unusual for the mustard tree to grow to that height. But it was possible. So because it was possible, but yet a bit unusual, some would say, oh, this is an abnormal growth that takes place.

And this is a monstrosity. This is something that God never intended. And then the clincher is we find that it shoots out large branches and the birds of the air, they come and nest in it.

And then as the interpretation goes, they say, well, the birds are symbolic of evil. Because remember, when we read the parable of the sower, what happened to the first seed that fell on the stony or on the on the wayside, the hardened area? What happened? The birds came and snatched it up. Who are the birds representing? Well, Jesus said the birds represent the devil.

And so there are those commentators who look at this parable and say, OK, we've got a mustard seed growing into a tree, which is an abnormal amount of growth. We've got birds lodging in its branches and birds back in that parable are a picture of the devil. This is this is what Jesus was trying to communicate, that the kingdom of God is going to become something he never intended it to be here on Earth.

It's going to become a monstrosity and it's going to be filled with evil, evil people. And, you know, historically, that has happened. No doubt about it.

The kingdom of God began very humbly with these few Jewish peasants, really following the Lord. And it went on in a very humble state on through the first couple of centuries after its beginning. But then.

In about 312, there was suddenly a radical change that took place when the Roman emperor, Constantine, when he officially declared Christianity to be the religion of Rome, and suddenly the church was catapulted into a place of prominence. And church leaders were suddenly turned into very powerful men within the empire.

The church then began on a course of abnormal growth and development that led to the papal throne and the the reigns of the popes and the the dominance of Europe and the wars and the intrigue and all of those things that took place historically that never, of course, were intended by God. And even on to this day. With the power and still the authority to some extent of the Roman church and of the Orthodox Church in the east, and then of the great influence wielded by the World Council of Churches and different groups of denominational churches that have departed from the faith and yet influencing governments and and kings and things like that.

And so that is another possibility. Jesus paints the picture. And.

Was it good? That he was picturing in the future, or was it evil? In a sense, both things have. Occurred, transpired as as I've indicated. Because, as I said, there's Christianity is spread beautifully and wonderfully throughout the centuries and with small beginnings.

Here it is today. Impacting the world still. But it is also certainly true.

That in its long history. There has been. A monstrosity that developed that the Lord certainly never intended and that unfortunately for many people is what they view as Christianity.

I've been watching a BBC series on the history of Britain. And it's so interesting to me as you go through the history of that nation and to see the. Not only the political.

Things that transpired, but how so often there was this interwoven thing between the political issue of the of the kingdom and the spiritual issue and the church and the state, you know, linked together and and, you know, wielding power together and sometimes to oppress the common people, sometimes battling against one another. As it was in the days of. Henry, the second and Thomas Beckett and their Henry wanting to make sure the church was in submission to the state.

But his good friend Thomas Beckett, who he whom he appointed as archbishop suddenly got religious and decided that the state needed to submit to the church. And so this, you know, conflict between them and then the great conflict between Henry, the eighth and the pope and all of that. And you look at all of this stuff and, you know, you think where in the world is Jesus Christ and the gospel? And the interesting thing to me is going through this series, the key.

Events that were transpiring at the same time that we as Christian people would be deeply interested in. Like the activity of John Wycliffe, who took and translated the Bible into the English language and gave it to the common people or the work of the various reformers and Tyndale and all of that, those things that we would be very interested in are just completely passed by without much of an acknowledgment in, you know, man's view of history. But yet all of the negative aspect of what's happened with the church historically is right there in the forefront of the historical situation.

And so it could very well be that the second interpretation was intended by Jesus as well to teach us that the church would be sadly, tragically. But yes, it's true. The church would be infiltrated by evil.

It has been and it will continue to be. And to some degree, it happens in every church. To some extent, you can't stop it.

That's just the nature of the situation. But we ourselves can make sure that that's not the case with us. And that's the important thing that we take heed to ourselves and that we allow this seed to be planted in our life and to produce that glorious fruit that God is looking for.

And so verse 33 says, And with many such parables, he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear. But without a parable, he did not speak to them. And when they were alone, he explained all things to his disciples.

So as we mentioned previously, to the multitudes, he spoke in parables without necessarily giving the interpretation. He would give the deeper understanding to his disciples. Now, that doesn't mean merely to the twelve, but it means to anyone who would listen and have an ear to hear.

Those who would be intrigued by what he would say, and they would say, you know, I want to I want to inquire further. I want to know more. And to those who would respond in that way, as the parable taught us, then more would be given.

The Lord was not keeping people away, but he was wanting to draw to him those who were truly sincerely. Genuinely seeking after the things of God for the right reasons. And so we leave off there and we'll pick up.

In our next study, in verse thirty five, Lord, we pray that the different things that we've talked about here this evening would be. Lord, applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Lord, you know, each of us are in a different place.

Each of us have different issues and things that we need you to work in our lives and work out of our lives. And Lord, we want to tonight just. Receive your word and have it do its work in our hearts and Lord, help us to be.

Those. Who. Hear the word and receive it.

Help us to be Lord, those who. Are receiving more and more. Because we're responding to what you give us.

Help us, Lord, to be those who hunger and thirst. For righteousness and to be filled, as you promised that we would. And so we commit ourselves to you and pray that you would work your work in our lives and Lord.

May that life of God be produced in us through your word. In Jesus name, amen.

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