

Matthew 13 • Why Parables??

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Matthew chapter 13. Here we go. Let's start with prayer, shall we?

Father, we come to You always with a heart that longs for You. And we just pray that You would speak to us through Your Word today. Minister grace, the life that is in Jesus. Let it flow in this place through Your Word, through Your Spirit. We just long for You to speak to us, to direct, and to give us hope. In Jesus precious Name, amen. Amen.

Matthew chapter 13, as we get into this, I don't know how many of you guys read ahead, but this chapter is just absolutely chock full of parables. And it's not like this is the first time we've run into a parable, even in this book, but I thought it would be wise for us to just revisit for interest's sake, the word or what the word, parable means.

First of all, here's a secular definition, all right. Check this out, on the screen. It says, a parable, of course, it's a noun. And the definition is, a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

par•a•ble (noun)

a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

“the parable of the blind men and the elephant”

That's a secular thing. And then it says, such as, the parable of the blind men and the elephant.

I know you're looking at me that way because there's no such parable. This is, I, it's like, well I don't know what Bible you were reading there but it sounds like an interesting parable. The blind men and the elephant. Didn't that sound good? We could write a book, a children's book or something like that. Anyway.

But here's what's interesting. The Greek word, parable, has a very interesting definition. Up on the screen, it goes like this. It means, and by the way it's parabolic. That's how it's pronounced. It means, a placing beside or a comparison.

par•a•ble (noun)

Greek: παραβολή parabolē;

a placing beside or a comparison.

And that's one of the reasons why Jesus will say, to what can I compare this generation? (Matthew 11:16) Or He will say, to what can I compare the kingdom of God? (Mark 4:30) Because that's what a parable does. It sets itself there to be compared, right, to a greater reality. And in this case, the greater reality throughout, really the course of this chapter, is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven.

By the way, they mean the same thing, so if anybody ever, tries to convince you otherwise they're wrong. Kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, doesn't matter, same thing. Jesus is going to talk about those things, the kingdom of God in this this chapter. And parable after parable will help us to understand what that kingdom is all about, what it means, and how we can understand it.

Here's what's interesting, though, before we get into this. Not everyone who heard these parables that Jesus is going to give here in this chapter, benefited from them. You guys know that, right? You are very blessed. I am very blessed to be able to read through these parables, and get in on the inside track of understanding what they mean, because Jesus gives us the explanation in many cases. And Matthew writes those explanations down.

Do you know that the people who heard Jesus give these parables did not have that insight? They heard the story and that was it. And then Jesus said, okay, we're done. And He would head off to the next place or whatever. And the people would go, huh, interesting story. The men and the elephant, or whatever.

And here's what's wild. That was intentional on God's part. Listen to me. It was intentional on God's part to not explain the parables and we're going to explain why He chose not to explain the parables. We're going to see it in this chapter.

But as we get into the first parable, this is wonderful and we don't get an explanation right away here. We have to wait until like the 18th verse to get the explanation. But this begins by answering a question and it was a gnawing question in my heart, until I really understood this parable.

But the question is this: Why do people react so differently to the Word of God? Why do you have 4 people, and they all hear God's Word, and they all have different responses? Well, Jesus helps us to understand that here.

It begins by saying, *“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. (in other words, to plant seed) ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, (meaning shallow soil, rocks underneath) where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (and then He said this) ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.” (ESV)*

Now, pause there for a moment, because as the general populace was concerned, again, that's all they heard. They heard the story, and it's like, oh, interesting, a little farming illustration and that was it. And that's the very reason why the disciples eventually came and they would ask Him, when they would get alone, what did that mean? Right?

But it says here, first of all, they got, they were troubled by the fact that Jesus only told a parable and didn't explain it because in verse 10 it says, *“Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?””*

And they genuinely wanted to know because think about if you were there that day. And you're sitting there looking at the— you're sitting around Jesus, and He's talking to the people and so forth, and He tells them this parable. And you're a disciple, and you're sitting there looking at the faces of the people, and Jesus says, okay, that's it, and He done.

And you see the faces and they're, humph, okay. They don't get it. They don't really understand the meaning. Right. And so they come to the Lord. Lord, why do You teach just in parables? Why do You just teach using stories?

Okay, here's the Lord's response. Verse 11. *“And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.””*

Now, wait a minute here. Be careful just reading this one verse. Because you read this verse, and you come across, and you might just close your Bible and say, well, it's not fair. But you're not understanding. And it might look on the surface to you like Jesus picks some people to understand and He picks others not to understand. And somebody could potentially walk away with that

conclusion, but that would be wrong. And I'm just telling you right now, it's wrong, so we need to stay with it here. And He's going to explain more as we go.

But I want you to listen very carefully to verse 12. *“For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, (he’ll have a lot) but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”* And look at verse 13. *“This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”*

¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

*““You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”* (and then Jesus gives the final piece of information to what's behind it all. He says)

*¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear, (and I want you to read this last phrase very carefully)
and their eyes they have closed,”*

Who closed their eyes? They did in other words, this was an intentional act on their part Not to hear and not to see. Okay. Very important that you see that they deliberately and intentionally close their eyes, right? He goes on to say, and I know where I stopped you in the middle of verse 15,

*“lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.”*

In other words, Jesus is saying guys, and this is important for us to all here. My heart, the Lord is saying, is to pour out understanding. But they've put their fingers in their ears. They've closed their eyes. They don't want to hear what I have to say and what I've been saying.

Interesting. He says this *“people's heart has grown dull.”* That's an interesting Greek word. You know what it literally means? It means, fat. How's that for being, offensive. It literally means in the Greek, like fat and lazy. Their hearts have grown fat and lazy.

Well, that's an interesting thing for Jesus to say, but guys, it's not like these people hadn't been told. It's not like these people hadn't been shown. Guys, we're talking about Israel here. We're talking about the people of Israel. We're

talking about the Jews. Guys, you have to understand no other nation on earth had been given the revelation that these people had been given. No other people on the face of the planet had been given the opportunity to know like these people had been given. They just stopped listening. They chose volitionally to stop listening.

And guys, we can do that here. And this is what happens. What Jesus is explaining here is what happens when you stop listening. When you just simply decide that I'm going to, again, I'm going to put my fingers in my ears, cover my eyes, and take on an attitude of stubborn unbelief. This is what happens. God will eventually accommodate you.

Now I say, eventually, He's very long suffering. Guys, this had been going on for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. It's not like God just woke up on the wrong side of the bed one day and decided, well, you know what? You guys are a bunch of stiff necked buzzards, and I'm going to pull the plug on y'all. And from here on out, you won't be able to understand a thing.

No. No. No. No. He bore with these people. He sent prophet after prophet after prophet after godly person. Think of all the people that God gave to Israel over the centuries that they might listen, that they might hear.

Now, that's what Jesus meant in verse 12, when we read that statement where He said, from the one who has not. In other words, from the one who has received, but they now have nothing to show for it. And that, essentially, was the majority of the people of Israel at the time He came.

They had been receiving for hundreds and hundreds of years, but they had nothing to show for it. To the point where they didn't even recognize their Messiah when He stood among them, right? Even He says, their ability to hear is ultimately going to be taken away and that's what had happened. And that's why Jesus spoke in parables, because their ability to hear had now been taken away.

Now, it doesn't mean if somebody was willing to change their mind that they wouldn't or couldn't hear again, because they could. And that's what repentance was all. That's why John the Baptist came, you guys. Was to open their ears and open their eyes through repentance, right? So that they could hear and see again. That's why John came. That was his function. Right? Now, the disciples They had already shown, for the most part, by their willingness to follow Jesus, that they longed to hear.

And that's why Jesus said what He did in verse 16. Look with me in your Bible. He said, *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”* And by the way, people, this is the same blessing that God will pronounce upon anybody who wants to know. Okay.

If you're here today and you're thinking, you're saying to God, I want to know, I want to know what Your Word has to say. Then you know what? He pronounces a blessing over you. It says, blessed are you, for your eyes will see, and your ears will hear. People, this is the deal.

I loved how Brandon finished the worship time by praying. And he said, did you catch it? He said, the choice is ours to listen and to open our hearts to you. Because if you choose not to, again, God's going to go, okay, all right. But if your heart is to know and to hear, you will know and you will hear. And that's why He pronounces this wonderful, blessing.

Jesus goes on now to explain the first parable. Verse 18, He says, *“Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, (hard heart, ignorance, whatever it is, He says) the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”* In other words, the enemy comes and snatches it away.

Have you ever shared the word of God with someone and they just had a blank stare on their face after you got done? It's happened to me. It's surreal. That's the best way I can put it. But the enemy just comes and just (Pastor Paul makes a sweeping motion) because there's no ability to even receive. When it says, the seed fell along the path, it's like the concrete, it'd be like as hard as concrete.

Verse 20, *“As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (they're like, whoa, that is great) ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.”* The deal is here that he's just, some kind of trouble comes up, and he's just like, I'm out of here. There's no ability to hold fast.

Verse 22, *“As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”*

We sang this morning, above all treasures of the earth. Do you guys remember that? We were singing that this morning? Did you feel that way? Did you really say to the Lord, yes, Lord, above all treasures, I am Yours, and I will follow

You. Because this person didn't say it and the treasures of the earth wooed them away. And that's that shallow soil and or excuse me, this is the thorny, weedy soil.

Anyway, verse 23 says, and *“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”* Different people yield, different. They bear different fruit. Right? But the point is, they bear fruit.

Do you know that by the way, these references to a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold, again, it's telling you and me that different people are going to yield different, amounts. They're going to, some are going to do bigger things. Some are going to do smaller things.

Do you know that God doesn't judge us based on whether you're a big producer or a small producer. Do you know that? He basically, it's all about faithfulness. It's all about faithfulness. Just be faithful. Just do what He gave you to do, right?

Here we have a simple parable. Jesus gives us a great insight into one of, is one of the biggest mysteries. Why do people respond differently to the Word of God? You have these different things that are given to us.

Jesus went on to tell more parables. Verse 24. *“He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared (there’s the word compared, that's what the word parable means) to a man who sowed good seed in his field,²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away.²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’”*

And what they’re saying is, should we go in the field, should we go gather them up? Pull up the weeds.

“²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.””

This is a fascinating parable that, again, explains a lot to us in ways that we wouldn't have known otherwise about what goes on in the church. The church.

Because this parable reveals that the kingdom of God has been infiltrated. Whoa, sounds heavy, doesn't it? Yeah. Kingdom of God has been infiltrated by those who falsely profess a faith in Jesus. They look like Christians. They smell like Christians. They talk like Christians, but they are not.

But instead of eliminating the influence, right? That has been planted among us by the enemy, both are allowed to live side by side. Have you ever seen a preacher on like YouTube, who's just being crazy and worldly about. I got to be careful what I say. I mean there's just all kinds of preachers that are just. Yeah homosexuality, homosexuality not a problem. God loves all people, which is true. And that's the one thing that I always harp on, that God loves all people, and we're supposed to love all people.

And you know what? They're right. God does love all people and we are supposed to love all people, but they stop there. And by inference, they're saying God sees no sin, which... Well, this is the infiltration and people are falling to it.

And so we see in this parable that He says, no, we're just going to let both of them live side by side and we'll settle accounts at the end. Does that give you the shakes? Yeah.

And so this parable awakens us who are in Christ to the very real threat that goes on even sometimes in Christendom. And we know that there are many influences and ideologies and things that are being preached today that just aren't biblically sound. And we got to be very careful that we don't get drawn into it under the guise of God loves everybody and we're supposed to love everybody. We know that already. But that doesn't mean that things aren't sinful and that we need to turn away from them. That's the whole point, but we need to stand fast, right? In the Word.

Verse 31, *“He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all seeds, (at least it was in their understanding at the time) but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”*

So a very small seed turns into a fairly good size, a small seed turns into a very good size tree. And what Jesus is doing here is He's likening or comparing, once again, the kingdom of heaven to this small seed that grew into a large plant. But you'll notice here, He said, the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Now, in the parable of the sower, did you notice the birds were a

picture of Satan? Did you catch that in the earlier parable? And birds usually do have this negative connotation in Scripture. Right? There are several passages where birds are used negatively and symbolically as evil and even demonic.

And so He's basically saying here, that the kingdom of God starts small and it grows into this big thing. But eventually it attracts birds, this picture of evil, and they inhabit the kingdom of God, at least on earth.

And if you know your history, you know that this began to really take hold during the Roman empire in the fourth century when, Christianity became the state religion of Rome. And suddenly it became fashionable to be a Christian and it was, it fell into immense corruption, very quickly. I mean, talk about corrupt.

And you're going to see this in a lot of these parables that Jesus gives here, He's going to talk about the corrupting influence that makes its way into the church. Okay. And again, this isn't meant to scare you or to make you feel like, well, I'm not going to go to church anymore. Well, that'd be dumb. The Bible says, do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together in Hebrews, right? (Hebrews 10:25) So don't do that. Don't stay away.

But just be careful because it doesn't mean that everybody you talk to is going to have their ducks in a row. And some people are going to try to lead you astray. And you've got to be careful about that. Right?

Verse 33. *“He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven (or yeast) that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”*

And so He's talking here about the kingdom of heaven using this comparison of bread and yeast. And we know that yeast is a very common, biblical, symbolic picture of sin. And it's a great picture because it's so pervasive, it's just like yeast, it works through the dough. Sin works through the body of Christ to the point where it saturates the whole thing. And that can happen. Again, you get the theme here? It's about corruption. Corruption in the church.

And Matthew goes on to write these 2 interesting verses; verse 34 and 35. He says, *“All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: (quote from the Psalms here, Psalm 78)*

*“I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.””*

And how ironic is that quotation, that here the Jews are hearing Jesus speak parables that open up their understanding, or could at least potentially open up their understanding of great mysteries that have been hidden since the foundation of the world, and they can't hear it. And they can't hear it because they closed their ears and shut their eyes. Right. What a tragedy. Jesus comes along and starts opening up mysteries and they can't hear it.

Alright, now this is, He's going to talk now about the parable that we read back in verse 24. He says, *“³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.”* You can see that changed between parables. In one parable, the seed was the Word of God. In this parable, the seed is the sons of the kingdom. You with me?

But *“The weeds (He says) are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”*

In other words, if you are able to, listen to what I'm saying here. So we see, interesting parable, isn't it? But again, the infiltration. The infiltration of the kingdom of God. Stay vigilant, stay on course. That's what we've been doing for 34 years here at Calvary Chapel. At least we've been trying to keep you vigilant and on course by just sticking to the Word of God. We're not going to get off on other books, other weirdness. I'm not going to do a series on the latest book I read. We're just going to go through the Bible. That's it. It may sound boring but it's what keeps us on track.

Jesus continues in verse 44. He has 2 parables here that sound very similar. Interestingly enough, He does not interpret them for us. *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. 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 *who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had*
and bought it.”

And so you've got these two interesting parables. Again, Jesus doesn't interpret them or explain them for us. We don't even have a record of Him explaining them to His disciples. But you have to just look at the clues and you have to say, well, what are some of the clues here?

Well, there's something here that's greatly wanted in both cases. There's a treasure in a field, then there's a pearl. So you know you've got treasures or things that are valuable, so forth. And then you've got a person in each parable who sells all that he has, or gives, rather, all that he has to own these. Okay?

Well, it's really interesting. There've been a lot of different interpretations whenever something is not interpreted in the Word of God, that gives this free reign for people to just go out and go weird. And they say, well, I think...

Honestly, the most popular and I think the most plausible, but you decide for yourself interpretation of this is that, these are these passages are referring to Jesus Himself. And the reason I believe that is because you and I, we got nothing to buy anything with. I mean, we're broke. We're like destitute. Okay.

Jesus, however, we see in the Word is the one who gave it all. Who gave everything. And so I believe that He's talking here, first of all, in the field, this treasure that He finds in the field, I think He's talking about Israel. And the reason I believe that is because several times throughout the Old Testament, God refers to the people of Israel as my treasure. And again, that's just a clue. And so if you're just putting clues together, this is what you come up with.

And I happen to believe that the second parable of the pearl that was purchased, refers then to the body of Christ; the genuine and true body of Christ because of the fact that He mentions a pearl. And you guys know how pearls are formed. And He says that He gave everything He had to own it. And I believe that the church fits that description.

We've been purchased by Jesus, but formed out of suffering. And that's how pearls are formed, out of an irritation, that becomes a suffering. This is what we read in the Book of Acts. Let me show you this on the screen. I like to quote this out of the NIV. It says,

Acts 14:21-22 (NIV84)

[Paul and Barnabas] preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

[Paul and Barnabas] preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. (I want you to hear what they say here) "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

In other words, that's how that pearl is going to be made. Okay, there you go. Hey, you still want to be a Christian? *"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."* Stop looking at each other going, things are hard for me, I must not be a good Christian. No, it's what it is to be a Christian. If it's hard for you, then hey, welcome to the club. It's hard for all of us, right? Formed in suffering.

The Bible tells us that we have been called unto suffering. That's one of those verses you're probably not going to put up on your fridge, make it a memory verse. But we've been called into suffering. To this you have been called, the Bible says. (1 Peter 2:21)

Verse 47. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away 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 fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

And this parable, essentially gives us the same message as the parable of the weed sowed by the enemy, that there's going to come a time when, at the end of the age, when things are going to be separated, and so forth, and so on.

But, here's the reason I bring this up. Are you guys aware of a teaching that is somewhat popular in Christendom that says the church is going to become so powerful over a period of time, and so holy, and so influential in the world, that we're going to actually transform the world to the point where when Jesus comes back, He comes back to a godly world. Why? Because the church made the difference.

Have you ever heard that teaching? Some of you are shaking your head, no. It's popular. It's popular. It's popular. But Jesus tells us right here that, well, He's contradicting that idea. Evil is going to continue on right up until the end and God's going to be the one to separate it, not the church. And Paul makes it very clear that in the last days, terrible times will come, and we're seeing that. We're seeing those terrible times, right now,

verse 51, *“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.”*
⁵² *And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe (your Bible may say, teacher, because that's essentially what it means) who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.””*

And guys, this is what you get when you study the whole Bible. I am so heartbroken over people who, Christians, Christians, who refuse to study the Old Testament. And there are, it's not uncommon. There are Christians who refuse to study the Old Testament. They believe that it has nothing to say to them. Truly. I've even run into some of those folks.

In fact, I even got a question once here a couple of weeks ago. What do I say to somebody who says to me, there's no reason for a Christian to study the Old Testament. Somebody asked me that. And so this is not an uncommon sort of a deal, but you know what?

When you choose to study the whole counsel of God's Word, you know what you get to do? You get to bring out of your house old and new treasures because they all go together anyway. There's a thread of consistency through the Word of God, from the old to the new. And you see this beautiful picture, greater dynamic picture of God's redemptive program as it courses its way through the Old Testament into the new. And the prophecies from the old fulfilled in the new.

Good grief, we're going through the Book of Matthew. He quotes the Old Testament more than any other gospel writer. Why? Because he sees in the life of Jesus and the ministry of Jesus, these fulfillments over and over again that come up to us from the Old Testament. And so there's this beautiful ability to bring out these treasures. Here's some old treasures. We go through the Old Testament. It's like, wow, these are old treasures, but they're cool, and then the New Testament presents its own newer treasures and they all bring so much clarity.

Verse 53. *“And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there,⁵⁴ and coming to his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, (He’s back in Nazareth) so that they were astonished, and said, “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?”* I want you to take note of that, that statement.

“⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And are not all his sisters with us? (we can't remember their names, but they're here, right?) Where then did this man get all these things?” All what things?

Well, they said it back there. They said, where did this man get the wisdom and mighty works? Okay. I want you to note that.

Now that it goes on verse 57 to say, *“And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.”⁵⁸ And (then from that point on, it says) he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”*

Very important. People of Nazareth, they were amazed. They were amazed, but theirs was an amazement of unbelief. You know that can happen, right? Somebody can be amazed in a sense of unbelief.

And verse 55 tells us, as I've already pointed out to you, that they recognize the wisdom by which Jesus spoke and they recognize the mighty works that He did. They saw that and they heard, okay, but something got in the way, something got in the way. Well, what got in the way? What? I mean, good grief. When you hear wisdom and you see mighty works, that should be enough, right? What's going to get in the way of that?

Well, the answer of what got in the way is really what is encompassed in verses 55 and 56, where they started asking all those questions. Isn't this Joseph's boy? Of course, He wasn't, but we know that. But they knew He'd been raised in the carpenter's home. And frankly, He was Joseph's boy from that adoption standpoint.

And so they're saying, isn't this Joseph's boy? I mean, He was the carpenter, carpenters, there's a dime a dozen, there's nothing special about a carpenter. And He goes on, it says, it's not His mother called Mary. We know His mom. Heck, I see her, daily in the marketplace. Known her since she was a young girl and all his brothers are here. They even names them, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. He says, aren't his sisters here?

Here's what's going on. They had expectations. Can you relate? They had expectations and Jesus didn't meet them. Because, you see, Joseph and his family, Joseph and Mary, they're just an ordinary, average couple. There's nothing special about them. And all their kids. I remember yelling at some of His brothers to get out of my chicken coop. There's nothing special about this family that I can see, that I can see. And then, and so what's with all this, these words of wisdom and these mighty works? What's all that about? Good grief, He grew up here.

And all of this created a puzzle that they just couldn't solve. Because, once again, it didn't make sense because it didn't meet their expectations. And imagine if they'd been told, oh yeah, He was born in a stable. His first bed was a manger. Well, that doesn't make any sense, so that's not the Messiah I know. That doesn't meet my expectations.

And since they couldn't reconcile those things, they took offense at Him and they were instead filled with unbelief. And honestly, I got to tell you something. I see the same thing happening a lot today among people who look at Jesus, look at His Word. They look at their lives in relationship to Jesus and His Word. And honestly, it just, it's like, well, I prayed about something and it didn't happen and God didn't meet my expectations. And they took a, they take offense at God.

And as a result, their hearts are filled with unbelief. Life didn't really turn out the way I wanted it to. I didn't see myself going gray and, all this other stuff that goes along with getting up there. And I, and this is, Lord, you have, You've let me down a little bit, okay? Let's just be clear about this. You've let me down. You didn't meet my expectations.

You guys remember, don't you, that just 2 chapters ago, John's cooling his heels in prison, remember? And he sends some of his followers to go ask Jesus, are you the one, or should we keep waiting for the real Messiah to show up? Do you remember? Just back in chapter 11.

Remember what Jesus said to, He told him? He said, well, just guys look around, go back, tell John what you see and hear. But then He made an important statement. Let me put it up on the screen. It's from Matthew chapter 11, verse 6.

Matthew 11:6 (ESV)

...blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

...blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

And again, this all comes back to the same thing. What do you do? What do you do when God doesn't meet your expectations? Blessed is the one who doesn't get all upset and offended when God doesn't meet their expectations.

Let me tell you something. We talk a lot about, we talk a lot about faith in the Christian church. We talk a lot about worship as believers. You want me to tell you what real faith and real worship are? Real faith and real worship begins to take hold when we surrender our expectations and we begin to just let God be God. That's hard. That's hard. But you want to talk about real faith, that's when you start exercising real faith. When you lay down your expectations and you trust Him even when things don't make sense.

I remember a time in my life when this lesson was powerfully given to me and I wasn't sure how it was going to go, frankly. Well, there was a couple of times. I've told you guys before, there was a time in my Christian walk when I actually invited my pastor over to the house to tell him that I didn't think I could do this Christian thing. That serious. And I literally told him, because I was going through so much hardship and difficulty in my life, I literally said to my pastor, I said, if this is the way God treats His children, I would hate to see how He treats His enemies. And that's the way I felt in my heart. And my pastor laughed at me. He did. He just laughed at me.

But there was another time that. I just, I couldn't believe what happened. Sue and I were living up in Washington. We were on staff at a growing fellowship. I was an associate pastor. And we lived one house down from a beautiful young couple that we spent time with. They went to our church as well. And he was, we were all in our 20s at the time so we're young and stupid. It goes along with being in your 20s. Sorry if you're in your 20s.

But, this young couple, we had two small kids. They had one child, but the wife was pregnant, and ready to burst. And, I get a phone call telling me that he was a roofer, that he had fallen off a roof into Lake Union, and hit a pylon in the water, and was killed instantly. His wife was going to go have her baby the next day.

And Sue and I, along with the other couple of other pastors and wives, had to go over and tell this young mom who did not know, she was at home making dinner for him. And we had to go tell her husband was never coming home. The day before she was to be induced, it was, it's the worst thing I've ever, I think

I've ever been through in terms of just, God, this does not meet my expectations, frankly. You've let me down.

And I remember, and I don't know where this came from exactly, but I remember that Sue and I were in up in our bedroom quickly getting ready to go over and tell this gal that her husband wasn't coming home. And I was just overwhelmed with the weight of what we were about to do. I mean, good grief, I was in my 20s. And I got down on my face right there in the bedroom, and all I could say was, I will worship You anyway. That's all I could say.

And I knew that situation brought me to I'm going to be a junction and whether or not I was going to judge God according to my expectations or just let Him be God. And trust Him even when I could not begin to understand what He had allowed.

Have you been there guys? Have you seen situations that you just, there's nothing to say. What do you say? What do you say to somebody when a situation, there's nothing you can say. So what do you do? Well, you make a choice. Lord, this didn't meet up with my expectations of a good God, but I worship You anyway, and I choose to follow You anyway.

Man, I tell you, it could have gone either way. I'm just telling you, could have gone either way at that moment. And some people come to that same crossroads and they don't make the right decision. Some come back later and some never do. So what do you do when God doesn't meet up with your expectations? You worship Him as the creator of all things, who knows what He's doing but doesn't always share it with you. And you move on, men? Let's stand together.

If you need prayer this morning, come on down front here, we'd be happy to pray with you.

Father, we thank You so much for the power and majesty and glory of Your Word. Your Word challenges us, and warns us, and feeds us, and thrills us, all at the same time. Lord, forgive us for those times when we've judged You. We've judged what You've allowed to take place in our lives, in the lives of others. Forgive us, Lord God, when we have been met with failed expectations.

Forgive us, Lord, when we've been offended and help us, we pray, to worship You, to serve You, and to put our trust in You. We commit our hearts to You in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and all God's people said together, amen.

Have a good rest of your day.