

Gospel of Matthew

13:31-35; 44-46

The Kingdom of Heaven is like...



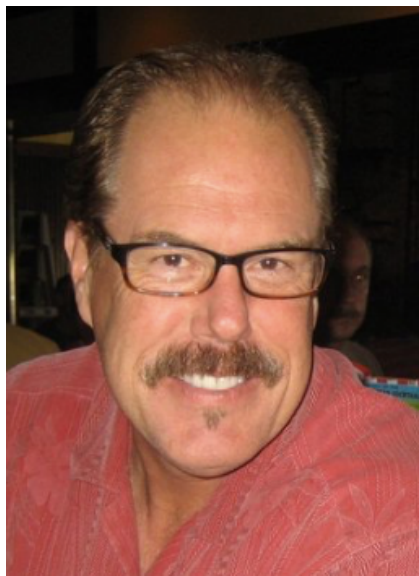
As the Great Creator, Jesus knew how people understand concepts. We do our thinking in pictures! Words conjure pictures in our minds, and it is the only way we can grasp a concept [illustration— pg 3. So Jesus did His teaching in stories and analogies, which of course, is the simplest way to conjure up pictures in His listener's mind. But that still does not mean they always understood what He was getting at. Actually frequently, even His own disciples did not fit the pictures in their heads together in a cohesive manner. Everyone thought the images were wonderful, vivid - and terribly thought provoking, but it left them scratching their heads all the time! What was He actually saying? And the text here says that Jesus was purposefully obscuring His meaning. He spoke in parables constantly – and just as frequently his listeners were impressed, entertained, but in the end, befuddled!



So Jesus is using four images to teach about the Kingdom of Heaven.



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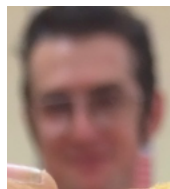


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= Message?

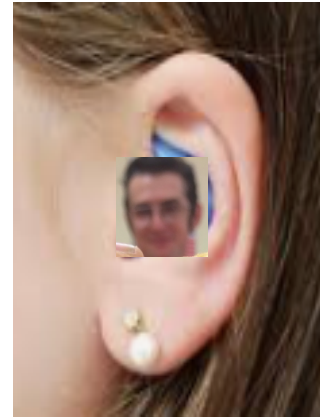
Satan is my enemy,.. and Karen's!!
Satan is everyone's enemy!!





I know that when I'm preaching/teaching, my goal is to be as clear as possible about what I'm trying to get a concept across the divide between my brain and the brain of my listeners. If someone is not getting what I'm saying, it certainly is not being done on purpose by me. It is either a failure on my part to make it clear, or a failure on THEIR part to really listen and do the mental exercise of putting together a concept I have broken down and made simple or logical for the sake of making understanding easier. But I would never purposefully obscure my meaning like Jesus did. I'm trying to make the gospel clear to all because I cannot read people's hearts. So I will leave no stone unturned in my effort to make what I'm saying as clear as possible within the time limits I'm faced with. I am prone to thinking that I haven't made it clear enough yet.

In contrast with my style, it is clear that Jesus was teaching in such a manner as to make the gospel clear to some, and to give others the excuse they needed to reject Him. He knew each individual heart within the sound of His voice. He was ingenious enough that the images He painted with His words conjured up thoughts that drew the people in that wanted to believe, and repelled those that did not!



So Jesus is using pictures once again here in our text - four images. “*The Kingdom of Heaven is like...*”

1~A the life-cycle of a **mustard seed**

2~**Yeast** in a batch of dough

3~Finding **Treasure**

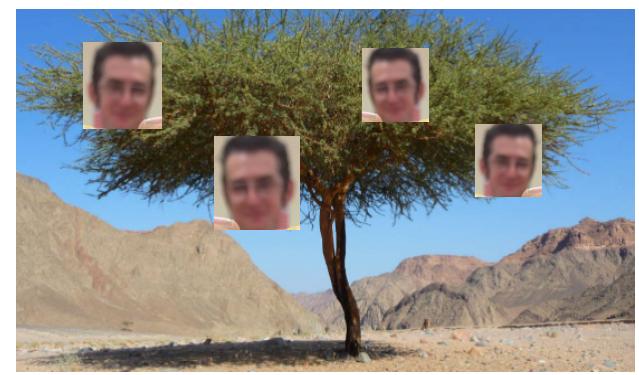
4~Finding a **fine pearl**



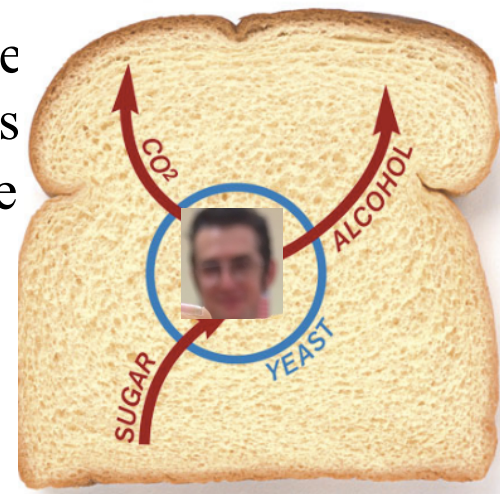
Understand that these images do not combine to compose a clear definition of the Kingdom of Heaven – not even close. Obviously, a systematic theology of the Kingdom is not what Jesus was trying to do here. He is holding back and it is obvious as to why – because His enemies were listening in! He could not just divulge everything He knew. His disciples could not handle it yet, and His enemies would only exploit it prematurely!

***“The Kingdom of heaven is like a
MUSTARD SEED...”***

Jesus speaks of the man who plants a tiny mustard seed in his garden. It germinates and grows into a tree that becomes big and beautiful - the centerpiece of his garden, a thing of beauty that even the birds enjoy! The emphasis is that it begins small and grows larger and larger. I think we can assume that the growth of the tree is a metaphor for the growth of the rule of God in a person's life. It doesn't start out big, but small! But it grows, climbing up the ranks of our values and priorities until we truly love Him! It flourishes until He is absolutely central to our lives, beautifying it and providing the symmetry that makes our lives both beautiful, complete, and useful to God!



“The kingdom of God is like YEAST” that a woman adds to her bread recipe and rolls and folds it again and again until she has worked the yeast through the entire clump of dough. Of course the yeast is crucial to make the dough rise. Yeast is actually a fungi that awakens when it is surrounded by moisture and sugar. It feeds on the sugars and creates a gas from the chemical reaction of carbon dioxide and alcohol produced as the yeast processes the sugars, and the gas creates the bubbles in the dough that causes the dough to rise and to have that airy texture that makes bread so light and enjoyable after it is baked.



The Kingdom – that state of mind in which God rules over our **intellect**, our **emotions**, our **desires/instincts**, and our **will**, works its way into every aspect of our being until there is no corner of our person untouched or unchanged by God's power! It is a process, and usually a rough one, and in many cases a crushing process, or a series of crushing blows, each of which enlighten and which incrementally increase our ability to subdue our own willfulness and listen to the unrivaled intelligence and expertise of God! The joy and satisfaction of the highest levels of surrender to the Spirit of God at every level of our person is a thing of great beauty and joy! And He uses that saturation process in our lives effectively - using us to expand and build His Kingdom rule upon this earth.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD” A man finds a treasure hidden in a field. It’s happened many times before, so it is not a far-fetched scenario. So this guy gets lucky. He takes a shortcut through a fallow field. “Fallow” means that it hasn’t been used for growing crops for some time. It is just a unused field growing long grass and weeds. And as he cuts through the field, he looks down by chance and sees something shiny in the grass, or perhaps he even stumbles over something sticking up from the sod. He kicks at the spot a bit more and yields another coin or two! Then he gets serious and starts scratching at the hardscrabble dirt with his staff or even his fingers, and low-and-behold, finds a gold bar (the thing he tripped on) and when he pulls that up, some cut-silver pieces are dragged to the surface with it! He’s never seen so much wealth in his whole life and he can see that there is more beneath – maybe even a small cask of it! He looks around to see if anyone is watching him, and no one is. He rests his chin on his hand as he stares down at this wonderful surprise. He stands there like that for a minute to think. Then he kneels down and shoves the coins, the bar, the cut-silver back into their places and covers them carefully with pebbles, and a couple of small stones, some wisps of dry grass, so that the ground looks undisturbed.



Ethically he does not feel it is right to just unearth the trove & take it home because it is on someone else's land. So, very cleverly, he invents a scenario his conscience can live with. He will try to buy the land and then that won't be an issue. But he doesn't have that kind of money in the bank. They didn't HAVE banks. But he has calculated that if he sells everything he owns – even his house – he could raise enough to purchase the land. But it will certainly be worth it because once he owns the land, he will own the treasure, and then he can buy it all back, or, NOT. He will have the means to buy a much bigger and better home and much better possessions! So he asks around as to who owns the land, and sure enough, they are willing to part with it for a reasonable price. So he sells everything he owns and buys the land. He has recognized that, although he loses everything he owns, what he will get in return is worth far more – not even comparable! So it is a no-brainer!



So it is with the Kingdom of Heaven. It is like finding a great horde of treasure and it can all be yours if you are willing to exchange what you already have for something that is obviously worth much more! *It's like having the opportunity to trade a \$150 generic suit from Penny's for a \$5,000 Brioni – even up!

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a PEARL OF GREAT PRICE...” This man found what he had been

looking for – a pearl of such rare beauty and symmetry that he too went and sold everything he had to raise the money to purchase it. Now, he would be in a much more precarious position than the man who found treasure in a field. Once he had the pearl, he would have nothing but the pearl. And he could not sell the pearl to buy back his stuff because then he wouldn't have the pearl! But something tells me that he would be so happy to have the pearl, even if it meant not having anything else. The pearl meant EVERYTHING to him because it was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen! To possess it was the crowning achievement of life!

Do you see the parallels here? Remember that Jesus is not actually speaking about a man that found his dream pearl. This is about a person that found the Gospel!



Many missionaries do this, especially those that move out to live with primitive tribes. They committed to live as do the people they are trying to reach with the gospel of Jesus. They literally have nothing primitive shelter and basic subsistence utensils for decades. Why? Because they found the Pearl! And they somehow knew they were called of God to trade all they had to share the great wealth they had obtained – the gospel! They GOT IT - really got it! Missionaries are the most obvious examples. But it can happen here too – in the midst of your everyday lives. You are called to the joy of discovering God, - the **love** of God, the **things** of God, the **calling** of God, of **serving** God, of **obeying** God, of the absolute **CENTRALITY** of God!



The Gospel is by far the most expensive, extravagant gift to the human race, ever conceived. We can comprehend its mechanics and appreciate some of more elementary difficulties of how it came to be. We know it was given at great personal cost to Himself by the Creator but not *how much* the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit suffered! I so wish we could comprehend it all. We can't, but we can start the journey. We can abhor/hate our own apathy. It is human to grow weary, to zone out, to not care, to not let our hearts be touched any more. But it is also wildly inappropriate to remain unmoved when we speak of the acts of God on our behalf! It is grossly inappropriate to be unmoved, to be unresponsive to the Holy Spirit when He moves us to do the right thing by God. For He is our treasure, He is what we have been looking for *and found*!

[Ph'p. 3:7-11; Eph. 3:14-21]