

Gospel of Matthew

13:47-52

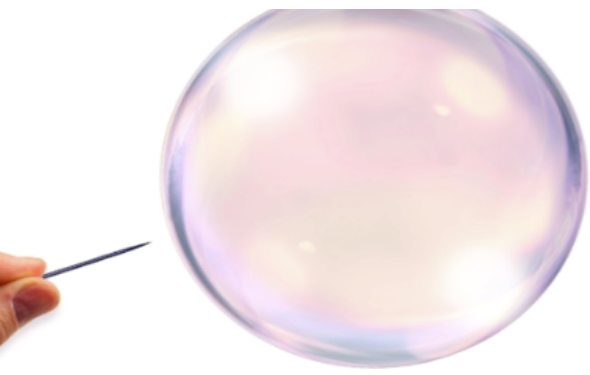
All Kinds of fish





There is another image of God's Kingdom that Jesus offers. This one is a severe picture! A lot of Christians will decide to just not talk about biblical images such as the one we will be examining today. They will shield their children from it because it is a dreadful picture. But I would advise that everything that Jesus presents as true is important, and part of the discovered "***treasure hidden in a field***"! If it is true and it is revealed to us, it is a gift. *If I have cancer, it is a certainly a **gift** to know if I have it as early as possible. If I don't know about it and don't *want* to know about it, and won't see a Dr., why that is just stupid! If I have it, I still have it whether it has been diagnosed or not, and the longer I let it go undiagnosed and growing in my body unchallenged/untreated, the less chance I have of defeating it, or at least extending my life. So to be diagnosed early is to be handed the gift of life! That is certainly something to rejoice about! It is certainly not something anyone wants to hear, but if it is true, it is actually an invaluable treasure to us.





One of the treasures of the gospel is the diagnosis that we are sinners separated from our perfect and holy Creator/God and that we desperately need a Savior. We don't like to hear it, **but**, since it is a foundational truth, it is important, and should value the fact that we have it! If it is true, it will do

y good to us and not harm, despite what our self-protective instincts tell us. And this is important - it will even do good to our children! The earlier they are introduced to the hard facts of life as revealed by our Creator, the better. I trust Jesus over myself any day and twice on Sunday! If the Creator hadn't told me that I am a sinner, separated from Him, and bound for Hell, I would naturally have exonerated myself! Rather than look at myself, I would look at other people that I consider worse than myself and end up comparing my badness to theirs. In which case, I would come out of it smelling like a rose! We all know people that are worse than we are!

But Jesus doesn't allow for this and it is critically important to know it! He makes it clear that this sin problem is between God and me. The badness of others doesn't factor in to the equation! He tells us that we all start out as far down as we can go – spiritually dead, unresponsive to God, and separated from Him by choice, both ours and His! That's important to know! That is the divine diagnosis and a precious gift to us! Understand that it doesn't have to be pleasant to be a great gift. [* My diagnosis of cancer] At all ages, though, we have to be able to handle the truth and appreciate its tremendous value to our lives! To protect anyone from the truth is a mistake! It softens their sensibilities and creates an unstable bubble of “safety” that is an illusion. So, we have to ask ourselves what happens when that bubble is burst – and it **will** burst!

So Jesus now used the analogy of fishing – net fishing – I to illustrate the nature of God’s earthly Kingdom. The fisherman go out to cast their nets and make a great haul of fish! You can picture them twisting and flopping and flashing their silvery bodies in the sun in a great struggling mass in the boat - fish of all shapes, sizes, kinds. But there are certain fish, rougher fish, that are among this great heap that are not wanted for whatever reason, and the fisherman must go through the effort of sorting them out, keeping the desirable ones and probably throwing the undesirable types on the beach so they don’t have to catch them again.



Since this is an analogy, Jesus is not talking about fish or fisherman. He is saying something important about the Kingdom of God! So what is it we can glean from these images from the Galilean Lake.

First it simply tells us that, contrary to popular opinion, God has not intended heaven for everyone! In fact, it appears that there will be a lot fewer people on the inside than on the outside!

[Matthew 7:13,14]

Most people choose to go against God. There are a thousand ways.

atheists – there is no God. And there are

agnostics - God may or may not exist. If He does, no one knows who He actually is. Others are

religious – but they are depending upon their church within a particular denomination to dispense salvation to them through some magic rituals. It simply does not work that way! I'm sorry to say it, but I HAVE to say it! Salvation by ritual, or by denomination is rooted in manmade traditions, but not in scripture. And if it cannot be precisely found in the scriptures, it is surely a human tradition that is absolutely powerless to save and far more likely to damn!

spirituality - a mix and match process of whatever makes you feel good, your truth is as good as mine, and all paths lead to God. I wish it could be so – I really do! But since it isn't, it circumvents Jesus, it doesn't deal with one own sins, and that is the whole issue! Only Jesus can deal with our sins! Then there are the many that are

undecided - but of course, I've said it many times, to *not* decide *IS* a decision in itself! You can't *not* decide and expect to have God understand, because He will not! He gave us intelligence for this very purpose and fully expects us to use it! This story makes it clear that He will not tolerate excuses! There will be only one kind of fish at the final sorting out – those that have believed in Jesus and that have followed Him, whose sins are washed.

Mothers - love your children with the truth! Tell them again and again of your hopes for them to see the great importance, the priceless value, of Jesus! Show them what it is like to love Jesus and to live for Him, and to put Him first in your life! You are God's most persuasive representative in their lives!



2ndly – getting more specific, this is a most likely a reference to the church – that many are *in the church* that do not belong to Christ. In fact there are many whole churches and even “Christian” denominations that do not belong to Christ. But Jesus says that, like the wheat and the weeds/tares, these individuals, churches, denominations, sects, and cults, and even the wolves among the sheep will be allowed to co-exist with true Christ-followers, and Christ-following churches, and it will be all sorted out in the end! I am reminded of when Jesus said that *“not all who say ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven”*. Not all who are in Christendom ARE Christendom!



Listen, let me speak truth here. Jesus Himself indicated that we have only this life to get it right. We can't depend on churches or pastors or denominations to do our thinking for us. Ultimately WE will be held responsible for our own choices, and others will be held responsible for theirs. We will not be allowed to blame someone else for misleading us. But don't get complacent. The only way that someone cannot be misled is if they read the scriptures enough to actually be familiar with what is in there. That is why here at Bethany we offer midweek Bible studies and an in-depth study during the Sunday School hour – because we want to provide you every opportunity we can to grow in your knowledge of the scriptures at an accelerated rate. That way you have a much better chance at not being deceived or misled – either here, or anywhere, or from *anyone*! The more you know, the more the Spirit of God is able to protect you, but it requires effort and commitment on the part of every individual. ⁷

It is why we begin young, with our children in Sunday School – even before that, in nursery. Children need to build a foundation. They are children – and they should not be left to their own devices to figure out the truth! People think it is wise to let their children choose who they will listen to without offering any adult bias! That is an insane idea! They should be given a foundation to be able to determine what is true or untrue, harmless or harmful! What we DO know is that they will be hit from every angle by false and dangerous ideas – and because of their inherent nature, those ideas will look good to them.



The only way to protect the children is to not let them remain an empty book. Don't let friends, teachers, the TV, the social media, video games, or movies, write their values and philosophies into your children's minds! Commit to bring them to Sunday School, mid-week Kid's Klub, or youth group. That way, in a relatively short time they can have resistance already written onto their page. It will no longer be empty, waiting to be written! They will have begun their truth grid already and if it is grounded in God's word they will have the best start that anyone can possibly have! So this is crucial! I'm not trying to guilt anyone. I'm trying to **reason** with everyone! I cannot think of a more important way to love your children than to bring them to the church programs provided for children, where the scriptures are given to your child by teachers and helpers that care about them. And then they are already in the process of putting the pieces of the puzzle together!



*If you are worried about the safety of your children because of the prevalence of bullies at school or in the neighborhood, you may enroll them in a Mixed Martial Arts class to teach self-defense. You are doing the same at home. You are enrolling your children in a Mixed Martial Arts class, where they can defend themselves from Satan's schemes, and the

foolishness of the world and you should have less reason to fear for them! Of course this is not the cure-all! Teaching also needs to happen at home! Read the scriptures as a family, read Bible story books, pray together, and just as importantly, practice the Fruit of the Spirit in your home/under your roof. Think of it – “***Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control***” under your roof! Now **THAT**, my friends, is a dream home! These godly characteristics lived out in your immediate family relationships, are the most convincing proofs to your children that God exists, that Jesus is worth following, and that His ideas can be trusted! They cannot hear one message at church and then go home and see their parents living and speaking something which is at odds with what they just heard! One thing children are not good with is ***mixed messages***, and they shouldn't have to be! Our homes should never be based upon our parents' homes – the homes we grew up with! As much as we loved them, They should be based upon the principles of following Jesus!

To the extent that our parents did not know Jesus or have access to the life Jesus gives His followers, that is the part that they did wrong and we must not follow them in that. When we find ourselves saying to ourselves that we are sounding just like our mother or father whom we vowed we would never be like – well, to us that is sin, wrongdoing of the worst sort, because we know better! Jesus our Creator/God has shown us a far superior way to live and create homes, environments for children that are an oasis of peace, harmony, and love.



Now, having said that, let me clarify that not all children will make the right choices in life – even in the best of home environments. We can't make that happen and must not think we can. But our job as parents is to provide every opportunity for our children to know and trust Jesus Christ and to follow Him above all others!

Finally, teach your children about Hell! Paint a vivid picture! Let them feel the heat with word pictures! Jesus said for us to let the children come to Him! Do not mythicize Him! Jesus alluded to Hell quite frequently, so to give your child Jesus is to give them all of Him – and that includes the Hell He frequently spoke of! As I began this morning – if it is true, it is better to know than not know. *When I was a kid or 4 or 5 I heard a Sunday evening sermon on Hell and I knew already at that age that I was a sinner and was headed there. That was terribly important for me to figure out – and I did! So when we got home I asked my father to help me not go there when I died. We knelt down together by my bed and he helped me to pray and ask Jesus to save my soul, to clean me of my rebelliousness and sins, of which I possessed enough self-knowledge (already at that young age) to know I had plenty of! And Jesus became mine that night, and I became His! It was a dramatic turning point in my life as I turned to begin following Jesus, to take Him seriously, to have Him become the central figure of my life! From there my life has been a quest to learn more and more of Him from His word and from my experience of Him in real life. And eventually, as an adult, to teach others what I have learned on my spiritual journey – often saving others from have to make the same mistakes or missteps as I did!

