



Matthew 13:51–52

51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

52 He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Reflection

I'm not sure whether Jesus is addressing the crowds or his disciples in our passage today. But whether it's the crowds or his disciples, when Jesus asks them in verse 51,

51 "Have you understood all these things?"

And they answer so promptly 'Yes' – I have to smile. People have puzzled for the past 2,000 years over Jesus' parables of the kingdom and I'm not sure that anyone yet has fully managed to plumb their depths other than Jesus himself. But certainly the members of the crowds or his Jesus' disciples who answered 'yes' so quickly may well have believed in their hearts

that they had fully understood the significance of what Jesus was saying. And in one sense, that is not bad at all. They believed that they understood, probably did understand Jesus' main driving ideas, and then they acted on them.

Verse 51 asks the same question of us and demands a similar response. But firstly, we need to respond to Jesus' question. 'Have you understood all these things?' Over the past week or so Jesus has taught us what the kingdom of God is like through the seven parables that make up chapter 13. What have you learnt? What is the kingdom of God like according to Matthew chapter 13?

Thinking about it, and comparing the parables, Jesus seems to be reinforcing

several characteristics of the kingdom of God by repeating them in different ways throughout his parables. So from his seven parables I think we can take away four key truths. Jesus has emphasized the kingdom's transforming power, its looming judgment, its surprising appearance and its incalculable worth. The kingdom of God transforms, results in the judgement of all, is surprising in its appearance and is absolutely priceless. Let's have a think about each of these in turn.

Firstly, the kingdom's transforming power. Do you remember the parable of the sower? The parable of parables. It would be perhaps better named the parable of the soils or the parable of the human heart. The kingdom of God transforms. The gospel is preached, the seed is sown, and

hearts respond. Some harden, want nothing to do with the gospel, and decisively choose their fate. Others respond in a shallow way only to give up at the first sign of trouble. Others still, waver for a season, toying with Christianity, and then choose the world over Jesus, never to return to him. But those who receive the gospel with openhearted faith flourish, magnifying Christ through their righteous words and deeds in his world. The kingdom transforms people, brings out their true colours, demands a response, and prepares people one way or another for ...

Number two, its looming judgement. Just like both the parable of the wheat and the parable of the weeds made so abundantly clear, the kingdom of God signals that

judgment looms, your response to it soon will be weighed, and there will be a great separation at the end of the age. It is black and white. You are either a member of the kingdom of God who has come to Jesus in repentance and faith or you are a member of the kingdom of this world, following the sinful ways of the prince of this world, Satan, whether you know it or not. On the surface we might all look the same in this overlap of the ages, but judgment looms, a great separation will follow and God's righteous judgment will prevail. Fence-sitting is no longer an option, apathy is rejection, it is time to decide.

And yet thirdly Jesus has placed an emphasis on the surprising nature of the kingdom. It has come in a surprisingly hidden manner and will gradually take over

the entire world. The God of the universe born a babe in a manger, a middle-eastern carpenter dies for the sins of the world, the religion of slaves, and women and a break-away sect of despised Jews, in less than 300 years, and despite the fiercest of persecutions becomes the official religion of the Roman empire. 2000 years later billions have lived and died confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. Yet that is nothing compared to the day that Jesus Christ will return in glory. On that day every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow, willingly or through force, before his majesty. Despite all the signs of the past 2000 years his kingdom is still surprisingly hidden, but not for long. Like yeast through dough, like a sapling grown to the largest tree in the forest one day his kingdom will characterise all, and he will

usher in a new heavens and a new earth over which he will reign forever in glory.

Finally, this kingdom is priceless, matchless, of inestimable, incalculable worth. What can a person give in exchange for their soul? What good is it to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? What price can you put on eternal life? Isn't that what everyone is seeking in our world? To live a little longer? To live a little better? To stave off death for as long as possible. To fill life to the brim with as many experiences as possible? Priceless, matchless, of inestimable worth. Worth selling everything you own in exchange for it, when by God's grace you stumble upon it you just have to have it, you can't believe your good fortune in coming across it, being led to it by him. It'll change your life forever, and by

that I mean forever.

The kingdom of God transforms, results in the judgement of all, is surprising in its appearance and is absolutely priceless. To this Jesus adds in verse 52 the image of new treasure. Teachers of the law were experts in the Old Testament scriptures which prophesied about the coming of the kingdom of God. As Jesus teaches new things about it, he's adding new treasures to these old treasures of Scripture. Transformation, judgment, surprising in appearance, priceless treasure.

Think

What's your response to the kingdom of God? How has it transformed you? Are you flourishing? Magnifying Christ through

your words and your works in his world? How do you feel about the coming judgment? How does it motivate and give perspective to your day to day? When you look about at the world do you see it with kingdom eyes? The kingdom is hidden unless you have eyes to see. How do you view our culture, its influences on you? What will perish, what will remain? Is the focus of your life the imperishable? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, where does your treasure lie? Is Christ your greatest love and your most priceless possession? Or is something or someone else standing in his place? What is your response to the kingdom of God, the rule and reign of Christ over all things?

Pray

Please close our time now by praying earnestly to God in whatever way you've been prompted during this time of reflection. Praise him for his kingdom. And pray that it would come soon. Did you know that was the earliest Christian prayer? 'Maranatha' Come Lord Jesus. Do you want it as much as they did? If not it's because you don't realise its worth. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.