

Lesson 10: PARABLES ABOUT HEAVEN
Matthew 13

READING:

First pass out copies of the enclosed page of text from **Matthew 13**, and have the children take turns reading aloud from it (also make one copy to display with the flannel banner).

DISCUSSION:

A. PARABLES

What is a parable?

(A story about earthly things with a deeper, heavenly meaning.)

Do you remember any of these parables, from having heard them before? That was one reason why the Lord spoke in parables. People liked to hear these little stories, and could remember them. The disciples often asked the Lord to explain the deeper meaning of a parable, and He told them as much as they could understand.

The Lord was trying to teach people that heaven was not just a place somewhere else that good people go when they die. He taught that heaven is something that grows inside of us, because when we die, we go to the place that has been growing in our hearts all along. Each of these parables tells something about how heaven develops inside of us—or how it is stopped from developing.

Depending on the group, you might want to ask them first what they think each parable might be teaching, and then tell them after they've had a chance to think about it.

B. THE SOWER

The Sower is the Lord, and the seeds He plants are the true ideas from His Word. Our minds are like ground, and those true ideas can only grow if our minds are in good shape, ready to let them grow. If other ideas come and snatch them away, like the birds, they can't grow. If our interest in the Word isn't deep enough, there isn't enough room for roots, just like the shallow dirt on the rocky ground. If we love evil things a lot, then those loves choke out the true ideas, like the thorns. But if our minds are ready and willing, like good ground, the Lord's true ideas can grow up beautifully and bear fruit.

C. THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

"Tares" were plants that looked like wheat, but their grain was poisonous. The Lord plants good and true ideas in our minds, which are the wheat, and evil spirits plant evil and untrue ideas, which are the tares. While we're growing in this world, we often are not sure what the right or wrong thing to do is. Things can sometimes get kind of mixed together—we might have some good reasons for doing something, but some bad reasons, too. The Lord knows that we need time to sort things out as we're learning, so He doesn't roughly rip out all the wrong ideas before we're ready. Like the man in the story, he waits until things are ready, especially when we have died and are ready for our home in heaven. Then, if we've been choosing a heavenly life, the

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Lord gathers all our goodness into heaven, which is the “barn”, and casts away all our evil, like the man who bound up the tares and burned them.

D. THE MUSTARD SEED

A mustard seed is a very tiny seed, which grows into a very big plant. This parable shows how even what seems like the smallest little true idea from the Word can grow into something big and beautiful and useful in our lives.

E. THE LEAVEN

Leaven is yeast, which makes dough puff up so it can bake into bread that is light and easy to chew and digest. This parable shows how the Lord finds ways to make His truth easier for us to understand and work into our lives.

F. TREASURE IN A FIELD

The Word may seem like ordinary stories, but it is filled with treasures—secret meanings that show us how to live a happy and wonderful life. When people discover these treasures, they joyfully give up all other ideas about how to live, like the man who sold all his other possessions to buy the field, because he realized how much more valuable this treasure was than anything else.

G. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

There are many lovely ideas in life, but the most exquisite and valuable of all is the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One God of heaven and earth. In the story, the merchant sold all his other possessions to buy this one great pearl. If we let go of all other possibilities of how to pursue a happy life, and instead pursue the idea that we can find happiness in the Lord, then we are truly wealthy.

H. THE DRAGNET

After we die, all the things we’ve learned are pulled up out of our memory to look at, just like the fishermen’s dragnet pulled the fish up out of the sea. Then all those memories are sorted out. If we have chosen a path toward heaven in our life, then all the bad things that still remain in our minds are cast away, like the bad fish that were thrown away. But all the good thoughts and loves are kept, like the good fish that were gathered into vessels.

Text for Parables About Heaven

PARABLES ABOUT HEAVEN

(Matthew 13)

“Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth.... And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop....”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way....[And the man instructed his servants]: ‘Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

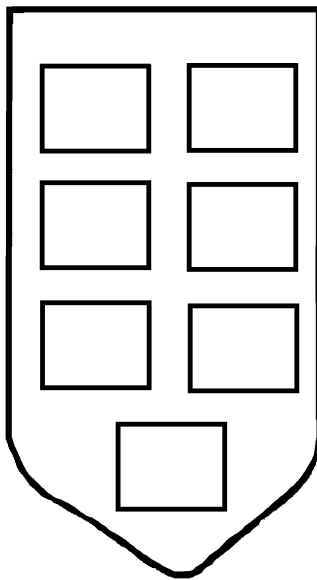
“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.”

PARABLES ABOUT HEAVEN PROJECT : Felt Banner

Text: Matthew 13

Supplies:

seven white craft felt squares, available at fabric or craft stores
one large piece of felt, big enough to mount the seven felt squares onto (any color)
more felt squares and scraps in a variety of colors
fabric glue
scissors



Procedure:

First, talk about what pictures you could create to show these parables.

Assign each child to work on making a scene on one of the white felt squares, depicting one of these seven parables about heaven. If there are more than seven children, let them team up to work on the scenes.

Let them be creative, cutting out shapes from the colored felt squares and scraps to glue onto the white squares and create scenes (if you want, you could bring in extra materials, like netting from a vegetable bag to be a dragnet, or real seeds to use for the parable of the Sower).

Finally, glue the seven finished scenes onto the large piece of felt. Tape at the top of it the printout of the seven parables about heaven from Matthew 13.

Display the banner so the congregation can enjoy it.