

# Five Ways to Ruin your Fellowship Group

Studying, discussing, applying and praying through God's Word together is fundamental to Christian growth, unity and service. The early church met every day to do this!

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42; 46-47*

In some ways, we do this on a Sunday, but meeting together in small groups is an opportunity to go deeper and to love and serve other Christians more closely.

**So, with that in mind, here are some great ways to ruin your Fellowship Group!**

## 1. DON'T PRIORITISE IT

After this one, the list below isn't really in order of importance. But this one is at the top for a reason. Probably the biggest way to help ruin your group is by failing to make it a priority in your week and being really patchy in attendance.

Some of you may remember the cheesy old (1980's I think!) ad campaign for a French perfume called “Je t'aime”. The catchphrase was: *“Nothing says “I love you”, like Je t'aime”*. Well, nothing says “I **don't** love you” (in a Christian fellowship type way) like regularly not pitching up to your group (or not logging in, if your group is only meeting online.)

Christian leaders love drumming home these famous verses from Hebrews to encourage church attendance: *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* Hebrews 10:24-25

But notice that it's not about “meeting for the sake of meeting”. (Or, meeting for the sake of keeping pastors happy!) No, it's meeting for the sake of spurring each other on towards love and good deeds. Like it or not, when you don't pitch (online or in-person), you potentially do the opposite and discourage others.

We've all had emergencies (family-related, work-related, health-related) which mean we just can't make a particular week. But make sure it really is just the emergencies. If there's a recurring problem in your weekly routine which is making attendance difficult, what can you tweak (at work or in your family) to make it easier to get to Fellowship Group?

PS: Sometimes people commit to a group (with every intention of being there regularly) and then realise, they've overcommitted or that it's just not for them. If that's the case for you, why not speak to your group leader openly and explain where you are at. They'll have some helpful advice for the way forward.

## **2. DON'T REALLY ENGAGE IN THE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD**

The study of God's word is at the heart of why we meet together. Here's why: *"The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes."* Psalm 19:7-8

Now, if that's true about God's Word, why would we not take the study of it seriously? Ask God to speak to you and change you, as you study his Word. Ask Him to help clear your head from the stresses of your day and give you the energy to focus, for this short time, on His Word. He does promise to make us wise and joyful through this!

Being "engaged" is not necessarily being the **most** talkative member in the group. God has made us all to be different and some will just, by personality, be more talkative than others. Engaging in the study means focusing on the passage and following the questions throughout the study and humbly reflecting on where you need to change. It will mean asking questions when you're not sure about something. It will mean sharing (in your own way) what you think and feel about how the passage applies.

Any school teacher will tell you how easy it is to spot the kids who just don't engage in the lesson. It's the same in a Bible Study and it's just as discouraging. So, for the sake of yourself and your leader and your fellow group members, try to focus and engage in the study of God's word.

## **3. DON'T GET TO KNOW THE REST OF YOUR GROUP**

It's easy to come to a group with a mindset of: "Ok, let's get this done. I want my bit of Bible and then I can get out of here." But one of the reasons we call them "Fellowship Groups" is to encourage genuine Christian fellowship.

Again, you may not be a very outgoing person. You may take a while to get to know people. Your group may be new and it could take a while for people to relax, "gel" and open up. Nevertheless, we can all make an effort to chat to others over tea or coffee before the study starts. If your group has a social, be there. Look out for your group members at church on Sunday; have them round for a meal or meet for coffee.

If you read the end of most of Paul's letters in the New Testament (Romans 16 is a great example), you realise that he just knew a lot of people! And had a lot of affection for them! We think of him only as this (perhaps intimidating?) preacher and theologian. But a big part of his Christian walk was getting to know Christians in these early churches.

#### **4. DON'T CARE FOR EACH OTHER, OUTSIDE OF YOUR WEEKLY MEETING**

As you get to know each other, you'll be more open about your struggles. You can be pretty sure, in the space of a year, at least one person in the group will go through some kind of crisis. This is when it's so important for your group to be more than just a weekly meeting. Groups can take a lead in actually caring for people pastorally, through hardships. In some emergencies your Group Leader and Care Leader will want to get others involved to help, but Fellowship Group is the best immediate context for prayer, biblical input and practical help. Be willing to help each other through the trials of life.

Look at Paul's example: *"Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."* 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

#### **5: DON'T BE DISCRETE**

As you get to know each other and "share life" with each other, there will be increased potential for gossip! Nothing can ruin trust and unity in a group quicker than gossip (within the group or with other church members about your group). Nothing can be more damaging to the mission of the church, than groups which descend into gossiping and exchanging rumours about church life and fellow Christians.

The New Testament is full of warnings against this. Here's one example: *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* (Ephesians 4:29)

**God does great things through Fellowship Groups. Through the work of his Holy Spirit, he will use them to mature Christians and keep us persevering. Don't be the person who contributes to ruining them!**

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## INTRODUCTION

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In Matthew 1:21-23, we are given the greatest news the world has ever heard. Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, *“the son of David, the son of Abraham”* (1:1), has come. His mission is very clear: *“He will save His people from their sins”* (1:21). Yet, He is not just the Messiah, but also: *“Immanuel, which means God with us”* (1:23). God has come in the person of Jesus to save us from our sins.

At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, we are commanded to: *“make disciples of all nations”* (28:19). We need to share this incredible news with everyone and call everyone to come to Jesus, receive His forgiveness and become a citizen of His Kingdom (now and forever). And we are assured that our King is with us. Jesus remains *“Immanuel”*: *“I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (28:20). The One who has all authority (28:18) is always with His people.

Even so, as incredible as this news is, as important as our calling is, it remains difficult. It can be very discouraging. When we consider the ocean of *“lostness”*, the sheer number of people still in rebellion against God and His King, it can be overwhelming. For example, there are approximately 80 000 people living south of Muizenberg. About 5% of the 80 000 at the very least attend a church. We are a congregation of 550 people. We haven’t even begun to consider the 4 million people living in the Cape Town region. The harvest is massive!

In our attempts to reach more people for the Gospel, to share the message of Jesus, we have seen fruit. However, we’ve also suffered many setbacks and discouragements. We have seen people come to know and follow Jesus (living as citizens of His Kingdom). We have been able to plant a church in Masiphumelele.

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We are praying and planning to plant more churches in our area. Yet, we have also seen many people reject Jesus, ignore Jesus, and even become hostile towards Jesus and His people. Growth in disciples has been slow and hard work. COVID-19 and the various lockdowns have made it more difficult to *“make disciples”*.

The struggle to make disciples might tempt us to stop trying. The large number of people who don't know Jesus (or choose to reject Him), might crush our enthusiasm to make disciples. We might be tempted to adopt a “bunker” mentality (stay put, stay safe and wait for Jesus to come back). We might be tempted to hide the Gospel, stop being vulnerable, shielding ourselves from the pain of rejection. This is exactly why we need to listen to Matthew 12-13 (part 2 of our series in Matthew 8-13).

In Matthew 12-13, we will see Jesus leading the way in being a witness to His Kingdom, but also encouraged and equipped to continue the mission ourselves. We will be reminded of how valuable the Gospel is; how important it is for people to respond to the Gospel. Jesus will give us a new perspective in understanding the seeming *“smallness”* of our mission. And it is our prayer that as we journey through these chapters, we will be encouraged and become bold to always be: *“the salt of the earth... the light of the world”* (Matt. 5:13-14).

In Christ,  
Carel Pienaar  
Phil. 1:21

**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 12:1-14**



# The King and True Righteousness

Matthew 12:1-14

# The King and True Righteousness

## STUDY 10

*“The deceitfulness of the heart of man appears in no one thing so much as this of spiritual pride and self-righteousness.”* (Jonathan Edwards, 18th Century)

1. What do you think of this statement?

## Investigating

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Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, there has been a contrast between the *“righteousness... of the scribes and Pharisees”* (Matt. 5:20) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:21-6:18; 16:5-12). The confrontation started in Matthew 9:1-17, but will escalate in our passage...

### Read Matthew 12:1-14...

1. What is the concern which the Pharisees raise in vs. 1-2?
2. Jesus uses three arguments from the Old Testament to argue against the Pharisees. What are they and what do they say collectively? (vs. 3-7)
3. Rabbis had often differed on the application of the Sabbath laws so some might interpret Jesus’ words as being just another rabbinical opinion. Why is Jesus’ view not a matter of interpretation? (v. 8)
4. What is the concern which the Pharisees raise in vs.9-10?
5. How does Jesus respond? (vs. 11-12)
6. How does Jesus demonstrate His authority on the issue? (v. 13)
7. How do the Pharisees respond? (v. 14)



## Thinking & Living

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The religious leaders of the Jews prided themselves on their lineage (Matt. 3:9), their righteousness (5:20) and their teaching (16:12). They considered themselves as “healthy” and “righteous” (9:12-13). The discussion here might be about the “Sabbath”, but the real issue is “righteousness”.

1. Why could they not accept Jesus’ corrections? What would it imply if Jesus is correct?
2. To what lengths would the Pharisees go to silence Jesus? (12:14)
3. What do we learn about self-righteousness, regarding ...
  - a) How it interprets and applies Scripture?
  - b) How it views the Gospel of Jesus?
  - c) How it responds to the Gospel of Jesus? How does the response of the Pharisees mirror Cain’s response to Abel’s righteousness in Genesis 4:1-8?
4. What is the difference between Jesus’ righteousness and the “self-righteousness” of His opponents?
5. How do you think “self-righteousness” could filter into and poison the church?
6. In what ways do you personally tend to slip into the type of religious self-righteousness we see here in the Pharisees?
7. Can you think of examples which show that this issue of self-righteousness is alive and well, even in non-religious movements in society today?

*"The irreligious don't repent at all and the religious only repent of sins. But Christians repent of their wrongfully placed righteousness." (Timothy Keller)*

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Pray that we would not define “righteousness” by our own standards, but by Jesus’ standard: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (12:7).
- 2.** Pray that we would remain faithful and fruitful in proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus. Nothing more, nothing less.
- 3.** Confess where you might be guilty of “self-righteousness”. Where you maintain the letter of the Law but neglect its heart. Where you have defined “righteousness” by your own or other peoples’ standards and not Jesus.
- 4.** Self-righteousness generally leads to violence against those who proclaim and live the Gospel of Jesus. Pray for our missions’ partners as they witness to Jesus. Pray for God’s protection.
- 5.** Pray for the persecuted church, where society and state act in violence against her. In particular, consider parts of the Middle East, North Africa, China and North-Korea.



**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 12:15-21**



# The Servant King

# The Servant King

## STUDY 11

Can you link the following strange behaviour with a role which would explain that behaviour?

Wearing luminous sports clothes, blowing a whistle and making strange hand gestures	Hamlet
Wearing a 16th century doublet, holding a fake skull and uttering 'To be or not to be'	Bishop
Standing dead-still despite tourist provocation, wearing a crazy tall bearskin hat and calling yourself a 'beefeater'	Referee
Wearing a purple gown with a tippet scarf and a dog-collar around the neck!	Buckingham Palace Guard

Sometimes unusual behaviour makes sense when we understand the role that person is performing. In Matthew 12:15-21 we are going to find Jesus' strange behaviour explained as the fulfilment of a very famous role from Isaiah...

## Investigating

### Read Matthew 12:15-21

1. What is it that Jesus is aware of in 12:15? (cf. Matt. 12:10, 14) You may like to remind yourself of the events of Matthew 12:1-14 covered in Study 10.
2. What actions does Jesus take in response? Is he acting out of fear here? (vs. 15-16).
3. Consider 12:17. What is Matthew's reason for the introducing an extended quote from Isaiah at this point in his Gospel?
4. According to 12:18-21, what is:
  1. God's relationship with His servant? (v.18)
  2. The Servant's purpose? (vs. 18; 20-21)
  3. The manner in which this Servant will achieve his purpose? (vs 19-20)



# Thinking & Living

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1. Remind yourself of John the Baptist's words in Matthew 3:7-12. Why might Matthew expect us to be surprised by Jesus' actions in this passage?
  
2. *'The Servant' in Isaiah 40-55 is a figure who performs the servant role which Israel failed to perform: to witness and proclaim God's glory to the nations. Ultimately, 'The Servant' achieves this through being 'raised up' (cf. Isa 52:13) and being made "a guilt offering" (cf. 53:10).*
  - a. In what ways do you see Jesus' actions fulfilling this role? Consider both what we've seen in Matthew and what you know of Jesus' life.
  - b. What examples have we already seen in Matthew of Jesus promising to bring the nations into His kingdom? (cf. 8:5-13)
  - c. For those of us who are not Jewish, what are the implications for us of Israel's failure to fulfil the servant role of witnessing God's glory to the nations? Consequently, what should we be thankful to Jesus for?
  
3. How does Jesus' method of achieving justice (restoration & witness) compare with the world's methods of championing justice?
  
4. The early church did not see the role of 'the Servant' being limited to Jesus (though of course He alone fulfilled it perfectly). Rather, early Christians, like Paul and Barnabas saw themselves as being commanded by God to take on the "servant" role of Isaiah as they took the Gospel to the Gentles (cf. Acts 13:47).
  - a. In what ways do you think God is asking you take on this "servant" role in your circles and community?
  - b. What can you learn from the way Jesus performs this role in this passage and the rest of Matthew?



## **BONUS QUESTION FOR PARENTS:**

Think about the roles your children will be taught by our world to aspire to fulfil. How will you teach them to aspire to be a 'servant'?

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Thank and praise God for His perfect plan to achieve justice (put things right) and to include the nations in His kingdom through the perfect Servant Jesus.
- 2.** Ask God to continue to give us as a church insight and understanding as we grapple with the extraordinary, and often surprising nature of Jesus' ministry in our King:Jesus series in Matthew's Gospel.
- 3.** Pray that God would help us imitate Jesus, by taking on the role of servant ourselves, as we proclaim the news that God has made it possible for anyone to be included in His kingdom.
- 4.** Pray for our Teen Ministry at St Peters, especially for our one-to-one and small group Bible reading meetings. Pray for our leaders as they do this: pray for time in busy schedules, transport, as well as diligence and godliness. Pray for our teens that they will be filled with the desire to know Jesus better through reading the Bible with others.
- 5.** Pray for Jon as he takes one day a week to investigate and research the possibility of a new church plant in Muizenberg. Pray that doors will open, and that God will make the way straight for us to witness to His glory in that neighbourhood!





# “The role of the ‘Servant’ goes to...”

**Jesus as the perfect ‘Servant’ in Matthew’s Gospel and what that means for us.**

## ICONIC ROLES

Michael Keaton (1989), Val Kilmer (1995), George Clooney (1997), Christian Bale (2005), Ben Affleck (2016) and now Robert Pattinson (2022) – all A-list Hollywood actors who have donned the mask and black cape of DC Comic’s iconic superhero: Batman.

Each of these actors is talented, and they have performed diverse film roles (think Clooney’s heist-thriller *Ocean’s Eleven* to Pattinson’s fantasy-romance *Twilight!*). Yet, to take on the role of Batman, they each discarded their ordinary identities for the iconic role. The black outfit, the gruff voice and deep desire for justice – those inseparable characteristics of Batman – all became theirs as they performed the role to the best of their ability. Undoubtedly some fitted the role better than others. Others, almost played the role to perfection – Keaton anyone?

Regardless, the point is this: some roles are so iconic that they transcend those who take the role on. Some roles will forever be defined by those who performed them (think Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker, or Viggo Mortenson as Aragorn). However, there are other roles where the actor will always be measured against the role itself. In this case, the measure being how close each actor gets to the icon of ‘The Batman’.

## THE ICONIC ‘SERVANT’ ROLE

In Matthew 12:18-21, we are invited to compare Jesus with a role in scripture more iconic than that of Batman. Namely, we are invited to measure the actions of Jesus against the role of ‘The Servant’, found in Isaiah chapters 40-55.

This is not the first time Matthew has hinted that Jesus has come to embody this iconic role. In Matthew 3:3, John the Baptist is associated with the one who will herald the coming of ‘The Servant’. In Matthew 3:17, the voice which speaks from heaven (“*this is my beloved son, with whom I am well-pleased*”) echoes the words spoken to ‘the Servant’ in Isaiah 42:1. In Matthew 8:17, seeking to explain the healing power of Jesus, Matthew draws upon Isaiah’s prophesy about ‘The Servant’ in Isaiah 53:4 – “*He himself took our weaknesses and carried our diseases*”.

However, it is now, in Matthew 12:18-21, that we find the longest quote of the Old Testament in the entire Gospel. Here, Matthew will make explicit the claim which he has already alluded to: Jesus' actions and ministry must be understood as an embodiment of the role of 'The Servant'.

## WHERE DOES THIS 'SERVANT' ROLE COME FROM?

Well, where does this role of God's 'Servant' come from? What characterises the role? And, who was chosen to perform this role originally? To answer these questions we must turn, as Matthew does, to the Old Testament book of Isaiah – specifically to chapters 40-55.

There we find that the role of God's 'Servant' involves bearing witness about God's unique character, goodness, and holiness to the nations of the world. See for example Isaiah 43:10-12:

*“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord,  
“and my servant whom I have chosen,  
so that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.  
Before me no god was formed,  
nor will there be one after me.  
I, even I, am the Lord,  
and apart from me there is no saviour.  
I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—  
I, and not some foreign god among you.  
You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “that I am God.  
- Isaiah 43:10-12*

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*This is the role of God's  
chosen 'Servant': to declare  
to the world the glory and  
splendour of God.*

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See also Isaiah 49:3, where the LORD says: *‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour.’* **This is the role of God's chosen 'Servant': to declare to the world the glory and splendour of God.** Through the performance of this role, God's 'Servant' will *“bring justice to the nations”* (42:1) and persuade them to put their hope in his teaching (42:4). This role, when performed, serves as *“a light to the Gentiles”* (42:6). These characteristics – like the bat-mobile, black cape and bat-eared helmet of Batman – are the characteristics of 'the Servant'.

## ISRAEL: THE ORIGINAL SERVANT

Well then, if this is the nature of the role, who was first asked to fulfil it?

In Is. 49:3 we have already seen the answer: it is Israel that is appointed by God to perform the function of this Servant (cf. Isaiah 41:8-9; 44:1; 44:21; 45:4). Through Israel, God had promised to bless all nations (Genesis 12:1-3), and it was Israel that He brought out of Egypt and appointed as a nation of priests (Exodus 19:6). God's people were the ones tasked to faithfully proclaim His righteousness and glory to the nations.

There was, however, a problem with this 'casting'. Israel failed miserably to perform the role of the 'Servant'. Israel was meant to be a witness. Yet, consider God's description of the nation in Isaiah 42:19: *"Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the LORD?"*. This is the issue that is at the heart of Isaiah 40-55! Instead of being a *"light to the nations"*, Israel proved to be sinful and idolatrous. Instead of persuading those around them of the unique splendour of the LORD, they had, instead, been persuaded to worship *"a block of wood"*. A *"block of wood"* – to slightly paraphrase 44:19 – which is first made into a figure, and then the remnants used to braai their roosterkoek. How foolish! With eyes *"plastered over so they cannot see, and... minds closed so they cannot understand"* (Is. 44:18), Israel had proved to be a very disappointing 'Servant'.

## ISAIAH'S VISIONS: THE PROMISED SERVANT

It was for this reason that God allowed His people to be carried off into Exile (cf. 2 Kings 24 & 25). Yet, for all their rebellion, God was not finished with Israel. In fact, it was into this context that God would reveal more of His plan to restore His people. We can find this revelation in Isaiah 40-55.

Remember, these chapters are written in a context where God's people are faced with two disastrous predicaments: their exile, and the root cause of their exile - their sin. This is why it is so wonderful that the section opens with a promise that God will once more deliver His people from their troubles!

*"Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.  
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the Lord's hand  
double for all her sins."*  
- Isaiah 40:1-2

Of course, the question becomes, how will God restore and rescue Israel from these two predicaments? As Isaiah 40--55 progresses we discover that it will be through two figures. These figures are each inseparable from their role: one is 'God's chosen

ruler' and the other one will play the role of 'The Servant'. In the immediate context of the Exile, we discover that 'God's chosen ruler' is in fact the non-Jew King Cyrus of Persia (cf. Isaiah 45), through whom God will bring an end to the Exile. But, it is the figure playing the role of 'The Servant' who will deal with Israel's fundamental problem.

This 'Servant', according to the book of Isaiah, will restore Israel so that they will once again serve and witness God's glory to the nations. More than that, this 'Servant' would also simultaneously succeed where Israel had failed! This figure would 'play the role', so to speak, to perfection. See Isaiah 49:5-6:

*"And now the Lord says—  
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant  
to bring Jacob back to him  
and gather Israel to himself,  
for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord  
and my God has been my strength—  
he says:  
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant  
to restore the tribes of Jacob  
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.  
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,  
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."*

**So, we see that it is God's intention not only to restore Israel through this figure but also, through this figure's perfect fulfilment of 'the Servant' role to display His glory perfectly to the world.** This figure will be "a light for the Gentiles" (Is. 42:6) who brings God's "salvation to the ends of the earth" (Is. 49:6). It is through his portrayal of 'the Servant role' that kings and nations will finally: "see what they have not been told and understand what they have not previously heard" (Is. 52:15).

One more thing, though, needs to be said about the 'Servant' figure in Isaiah 40-55. As more gets revealed about this 'Servant', we find that this perfect portrayal involves actions that we would never have anticipated. According to Isaiah, the perfect fulfilment of 'the Servant' will involve extraordinary gentleness: "**He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out**" (Is. 42:2-3). More than that even, this Servant will be physically humiliated and abused: His back will be beaten, his beard pulled, and his face will be spat upon (Is. 50:6). Ultimately, he will be stricken, smitten, afflicted, pierced, crushed, and wounded (Is. 53:4-5). Yet, it will be through this fulfilment that 'The Servant' will restore and reveal the glory and "arm of the LORD" (Isaiah 53:1). Hence the culmination of this entire section in Isaiah:

*"After he has suffered,  
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;  
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,  
and he will bear their iniquities."  
- Isaiah 53:11*

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## JESUS: THE PERFECT SERVANT

Who then is the figure who will fulfil this 'Servant' role so perfectly?

Matthew makes no secret of his conviction: it is Jesus whose life perfectly corresponds with the role of 'The Servant'. Matthew sees that Jesus is uniquely chosen by God (Matt 3:16-17/Is. 42:2). His healing power comes from bearing the weakness and disease of the crowds upon himself (Matt 8:17/Is. 53:4). His ministry of gentleness and non-political confrontation is explained as a characteristic of the role of 'the Servant' (Matt 12:19-20/Is. 42:2-3). The 'Servant' role is Jesus' mission: *"whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20:27-28). Which is why, despite entering Jerusalem triumphantly (Matt.21:1-11), Jesus is led out of the city having been spat upon, beaten and slapped (Matt. 26:16 / Is. 50:6), carrying His cross to the place of his crucifixion and His death.

But, the perfect 'Servant' portrayal cannot end there. The first day of that week the perfect 'Servant' leaves the tomb, raised to life and having victoriously achieved redemption for God's people. God's glory is now fully displayed! Which is why Matthew's Gospel ends with God's people once more commissioned to witness God's glory to the nations: *"go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 28:19).

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*It is this witness that becomes the mission of those first Christians. They witness to God's glory displayed in Jesus, and through this witness God's people are restored to Him and then invited to take the news of Jesus to their own communities!*

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## CHRISTIANS: THE NEW SERVANTS

It is this witness that becomes the mission of those first Christians. They witness to God's glory displayed in Jesus, and through this witness God's people are restored to Him and then invited to take the news of Jesus to their own communities (cf. Acts 2:22-41)! What does this mean except that those Christians became fulfillers of this 'Servant' role themselves as they imitated and followed in the steps of Jesus. This is how God was achieving His purpose. Through the perfect portrayal of 'the Servant role', Jesus had made a way for people of all nationalities to become like Him. Imitating Jesus, these Christians witnessed to the splendour of God and invited others into restored relationship with Him.

This is why Paul describes Jesus as calling him to take on the role of ‘the Servant’ on the road to Damascus:

*“We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’*

*Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’*

*‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. **I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.**”*

– Acts 26:14-18

It is also why Paul, in Romans 15:7-21, invites the church in Rome to partner with him in taking the news of Jesus to places “*where Christ has not been named*”. While Jesus’ portrayal of ‘the Servant’ can never be surpassed and remains the perfect fulfilment of the role, it is *not* the end of the Servant role. Rather, every Christian is now invited to take that role upon themselves.

## **YOU AND I: THE SERVANT IMITATORS**

What does this then mean for you and me? Well, to return to our Batman illustration, it means that we are all being asked to don the iconic cape and mask! Just as we can reflect on the many who have taken on the role of Batman, so too can we reflect on the many who have taken on the role of ‘the Servant’. But we are not merely asked to admire their attempts from a distance. Instead, we are invited to take on the iconic role ourselves, as we seek to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus. Embodying the Servant’s gentleness and steadfast purpose, we are invited to display the glory of God as Christ’s servants (2 Cor. 4:5). And, in doing so, you and I will be transformed into a light to the world (Matt 5:14) and witnesses to the nations (Matt. 28:19-20).

What a responsibility! What a privilege!

Will you accept the role?

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*“I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”*

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**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 12:22-45**

# The King's Liberation



Matthew 12:22-45

# The King's Liberation

## STUDY 12

*“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them”*  
(C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*)

1. What do you think of this statement? Discuss...

## Investigating

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### Read Matthew 12:22-45

1. What did Jesus do and what question are the people grappling with (vs. 22-23)?
2. How do the Pharisees answer the question of v. 23? (v. 24)
3. What is Jesus' basic argument / point in vs. 25-28? Try to put it in your own words.
4. What does the mini parable in v. 29 mean?
5. Given the context, what do you think is the “unforgivable” sin (vs. 30-32)? How would you explain this in your own words?
6. What is Jesus' basic argument / point in vs. 33-37? Try to put it in your own words.
7. Why does Jesus refuse to give the Pharisees “a sign”? What is the sign that **will** be given, according to Jesus?
8. In vs. 41-45 Jesus seems to be giving a stern warning to “this wicked generation”. What do you think is the gist of this warning? How does it relate to what we have seen so far?



# Thinking & Living

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1. How does Matthew 12:22-45 inform how we need to understand...
  - Spiritual forces today (the demonic)?
  - Jesus' mission in relation to the demonic?
  - Jesus' identity? How will you answer the question of v. 23?
2. Christians are easily unsettled by vs. 31-32. Indirectly, what is the massive encouragement from these verses? What is the warning in these verses?
3. According to Jesus, why does it matter what we say about Him? What do our words reveal? (Remember vs. 33-37)
4. People often demand “*signs*” to believe (like the Pharisees in v. 38). Jesus has already performed many signs (cf. 11:5; 12:22). According to Jesus, what is the ultimate/only sign we need? (v. 40)
5. Consider how this section begins (v. 22) and ends (vs. 43-45). What is the danger if someone ignores or rejects Jesus?
6. Children (and adults) are often afraid of the spiritual realm (evil spirits). Horror movies and fantasy books often give the impression that good and evil are equal competing forces in this world. How can you use Matthew 12:22-45 to teach your children or grandchildren about Jesus and the spiritual realm?



# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Pray for God's power in Christ to continue to crush the power of Satan in the world: *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you"* (Rom. 16:20)
- 2.** We don't want our community to be "worse" for rejecting Jesus (vs. 43-45). Therefore, pray for...
  - Family and friends, you know who don't trust and follow Jesus
  - Each generation: Young and Old
  - The Deep South and its diverse communities
  - Our mission partners witnessing to Jesus and His Kingdom: *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* (Eph. 6:12)
- 3.** Pray for one another. That we will not be afraid/infatuated with the demonic/spiritual forces. Pray that we will be encouraged and bold in witnessing to Jesus (who has bound and still plunders Satan's house).



**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 12:46-50**

# The King's True Family



Matthew 12:46-50

# The King's True Family

## STUDY 13

*“There would be no sense in saying you trusted Jesus if you would not take his advice.” (C.S. Lewis)*

1. What do you think of this statement?



## Investigating

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**Read Matthew 12:46-50**

1. Who was wanting to speak to Jesus while He was talking to the crowds?
2. What was Jesus' response? (v. 48)
3. Who does Jesus claim to be His family? (v. 49)
4. What does Jesus say makes them a mother, sister or brother? (v. 50)



## Thinking & Living

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1. How do you think Jesus' ("biological") mother and brothers felt about this? Why did they need to hear this?
2. How do you think/feel about Jesus' response?
3. How does Jesus' answer in Matthew 12:49-50 echo 8:22 and 10:37?
4. If doing the Father's will is the mark of being part of Jesus's family, then we need to understand what that phrase means in the context of Matthew. Look at the verses below and discuss what it means to do the Father's will...

<b>5:16</b>	<i>“... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”</i>
<b>5:44-45, 48</b>	<i>“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”</i>
<b>6:1, 4</b>	<i>“Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven... And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”</i>
<b>6:9-10</b>	<i>“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”</i>
<b>6:32-33</b>	<i>“For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”</i>
<b>7:21, 24</b>	<i>“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven... Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”</i>

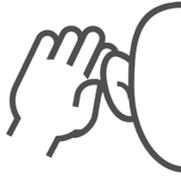
5. How do you know you are part of Jesus' family? (What have we seen so far in Matthew's Gospel?)
6. Later in Matthew 18:15-20 Jesus describes His family as the “church” (the gathering of Jesus' followers). If we are a part of His family (the church) ...
  - How does this change how you view the people gathering on a Sunday or your Fellowship Group?
  - How will this change how you relate to them?
  - How can you be a “brother and sister and mother” to them?

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Pray that God's family would continue to grow. As we continue to share the gospel that many would come to believe in Him, learn what it means to do the Father's will and live as God's family.
- 2.** Pray for our fellowship groups. That, together, we would continue to grow in God's Word as we help one another understand and apply what it means to do the Father's will.
- 3.** Pray for our mission partners: Eugene & Dawn Reyneke; Greg Phillips; Rod and Glenda Thomas; Cricket Meyer; Katleho & Delight Meslane; Explore Course (theological training in Africa); Ana a Yesu (education in Malawi). Pray that they would be able to continue to grow God's family and teach others to follow God's will in their lives.
- 4.** Praise and thank God that we have the privilege of being part of His family. That we can be brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in Christ. Praise God that anyone who trusts and follows Jesus can become part of His family (no matter their background)!
- 5.** Pray for your biological family and friends who don't believe and follow Jesus: that they would turn to Jesus and join His family.





## “He who has an ear...”

### Understanding Parables

Most of us are familiar with stories that have a lesson; calling us to action (to respond in a certain way or to understand the world in a certain way). For example, although Little Red Riding Hood seems like an innocent story, it is also multi-layered in its meaning and application. One meaning is that the “wolf” represents a stranger that might appear harmless but will cause harm when trusted.

In Matthew 13, Jesus begins to answer many questions that have been forming since the start of the Gospel. Yet, He does not give a straightforward, ‘textbook’, answer. Instead, Jesus speaks in parables. Parables which can be defined as: “*a fictitious saying picturing truth*” (Theon, 1st Century). They are:

*“imagery gardens with real toads in them. They create an imaginary world that reflects reality... they are a tactical maneuver to prompt new thinking and that their author engages to manipulate... The immediate aim of a parable is to be compellingly interesting, and in being interesting it diverts attention and disarms. A parable’s ultimate aim is to awaken insight, stimulate the conscience, and move to action”* (Snodgrass 2008:8).

They are an indirect way to prompt the hearer towards the truth we have already started to observe in Jesus’ teachings and ministry.

Yet, like our favourite children’s stories, a parable’s meaning is only available to someone who is willing to listen. Someone who is willing to pause and consider what “**reality**” this fictitious story is pointing to or expounding. To the average hearer, it was just a pleasant story. Something to put you to sleep at night. Yet, as Jesus repeatedly calls: “*He who has ears, let him hear*” (Matt. 13:9, 43). Only those who are genuinely listening will discover the truth of a parable. The meaning will not

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*[Parables] are imagery gardens with real toads in them...”*

– Klyne R. Snodgrass  
in ‘Stories with Intent’

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be immediately apparent. Moreover, to uncover the truth of a parable, we need to turn to the One who reveals its truth: God/Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:25-27; 13:11).

Consequently, we need to have: “*the willingness to hear and respond appropriately*” (Snodgrass 2008:24). We need to turn to God who reveals the meaning of any parable. And there are three factors (clues) God has given us to unlock a parable’s meaning...

## THREE THINGS TO LISTEN FOR...

I will use the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23) as an example...

### 1. RECALL the story so far (what Jesus has done, is doing and will do)

In Matthew 4-12, as Jesus started His ministry, we have already noticed a mixed response. The first disciples followed Jesus immediately (4:18-22). The crowds were amazed, but non-committal (cf. 7:28-29; 11:16-17). The religious leaders rejected Jesus immediately and became His strongest opposition (cf. 12:14). The question that should have been forming in our mind is this: *“If Jesus is really the Messiah, then why such a varied response? Why don’t the religious leaders (students of the Torah and Prophets) accept Jesus?”* The Parable of the Sower begins to answer this. The four soils help us understand what we have observed in the story so far.

Yet, this is not the only thing we need to listen for...

### 2. REMEMBER Jesus’ teaching (What He said)

In Matthew 4-12, Jesus has repeatedly taught His disciples to expect a mixed response. Their witness will cause some to persecute them (5:10-12), while others will *“give glory to your Father who is in heaven”* (5:16). Many will reject Jesus (7:13), very few will ultimately follow Jesus (7:14) and some will have a false sense of security in thinking they belong to Jesus (7:21-23). The few are those who: *“[hear] these words of mine and [do] them”* (7:24). Moreover, Jesus has stressed the costliness of following Him. It might imply losing possessions/security and your family (8:18-22). It might imply state persecution, relational division, and rejection (10:16-39). Jesus has already described this generation as unresponsive (11:16-17). He has warned the religious leaders of being under the sway and deception of Satan and his demons. They are in serious danger of ending in a *“worse”* state than when they started (12:22-45). Lastly, a disciple, a true family member of Jesus, is someone who: *“does the will of my Father in heaven”* (12:50).

In many ways, what Jesus has taught is reflected in the four soils we observe in the parable of the sower. Some instantly reject Him. Some follow for a while, but due to social pressure/persecution or the concerns/loves of this world have abandoned Jesus. Only a quarter will be *“good soil”* (Jesus’ *“few”*). Nevertheless, there is one more thing to do...

### 3. REFLECT on the Old Testament

A theme in Matthew's Gospel is Jesus' fulfilment of the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 1:1, 22-23; 2:5-6, 14-15, 17-18; 3:1-3; 5:17-20). The mistake we sometimes make is that we limit our understanding of Jesus' fulfilment to the explicit passages mentioned in Matthew's Gospel. What we should realize is that everything Jesus does and says is related to the Old Testament. This includes His parables: "*Jesus did not haphazardly choose parables as the medium of communication. Parables are prophetic instruments, the language of the OT prophets, which occur especially in contexts of judgment and indictment*" (Snodgrass 2008:159). Consequently, we should be sensitive to the "echoes" we hear in Jesus' ministry, which requires reflection.

So, if you pause and reflect on the parable of the sower, then you will discover some remarkable "echoes" of the prophets and Jewish writings. For example, Isaiah described his generation as a people: "*unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD*" (Is. 30:9). Nevertheless, God promises that He will be their Teacher, releasing them from their idolatry and restoring them: "*your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you*" (30:20-21). Furthermore, God's words are described as seeds that will not return void (Isaiah 55:10-11).

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*The mistake we sometimes make is that we limit our understanding of Jesus' fulfilment to the explicit passages mentioned in Matthew's Gospel.*

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Similarly to Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah describes the people's hearts as soil that they need to: "*break up*" and "*sow not among thorns*". This "parable" is explained in an action; the people of Israel need a total transformation in their hearts: "*Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts*" (Jer. 4:3-4). Yet, Jeremiah's generation was also one: "*who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not*" (Jer. 5:21). Sadly, this diagnosis is repeated by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezk. 12:2). Even so, like Isaiah, Ezekiel sees a day when the LORD will personally intervene: "*For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it.*" (Ezk. 36:9-10).

Following the prophetic theme, the Jewish writing of 4 Ezra describes a day:

*"Hear me, O Israel... For I sow my law in you, and it shall bring forth fruit in you, and you shall be glorified through it forever"* (4 Ezra 9:30-35). Yet, not all the seedlings sown will bear fruit: "*For just as the farmer sows many seeds in the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will come up in due season, and not all that were planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved*" (4 Ezra 4:28-32).

At surface level, we might consider Jesus' parable of the sower to be like the fable "*Little Red Riding Hood*". Yet, if we care to listen (recall, remember and reflect), we will see that Jesus is pulling together all the threads of the prophets and Jews into one tapestry pointing to Him and their response to Him. It is multi-layered in its meaning. Yet, to those who don't care to listen, they will remain like the generation who did not respond to the call: it will just be an entertaining story (cf. **Matt. 11:13-19**).

Which leads to our last point...

## **AFTER YOU HAVE LISTENED... DO IT!**

The goal of a parable is not just to understand it, but to respond as well. We are meant to: *“hear these words of mine (Jesus) and do them”* (Matt. 7:24). Biblically, you only really listen if you actually do something about it. You haven't listened if you did not respond appropriately. So, we need to ask ourselves: *“How does Jesus want me to respond to His parable of the sower?”*

As the person sowing the *“word of the kingdom”* (13:19), the parable is a realistic encouragement. We should expect that many will ultimately turn away from the Gospel for various reasons (persecution, present concerns etc.). Yet, we should also expect *“good soil”*. There will be people who will truly understand, take Jesus' message to heart and live incredibly fruitful lives for His Kingdom. We are assured by the parable that God's Word will not return void. So, keep sowing the seed! Don't give up! Expect a harvest!

Yet, as a person listening to the *“word of the kingdom”*, the parable is a warning. If our greatest concern is our personal safety and that our community (peers, friends and family) would accept us and like us, then we might be in danger of not being *“good soil”*. At some point, our loyalty and love for Jesus will be tested and we will be found wanting (cf. Matt. 8:18-22; 10:16-25, 34-39). As Charles Spurgeon put it: *“Do you expect to be honoured in the world where your Lord was crucified?”* If we think we can serve Jesus and wealth at the same time (pursue the world and Jesus at the same time), then we are warned that the *“word of the kingdom”* will be choked in our lives. We need to take Jesus' warning seriously: *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* (Matt. 6:24).

So, listener, have you really picked up your Cross and followed Jesus? Have you truly understood the Gospel? Are you *“good soil”*?

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*Biblically, you only really listen if you actually do something about it. You haven't listened if you did not respond appropriately.*

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**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 13:1-23**



The Parable of the  
Sower & Soils

Matthew 13:1-23

# The Parable of the Sower & Soils

## STUDY 14

1. If the Gospel is such good news, why do so many people ignore or reject it? Why do so many seem to begin with it but not continue? Why do people believe it and follow Jesus?



## Investigating

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Jesus' ministry has been drawing large crowds (cf. Matt. 4:25; 5:1; 7:28; 8:1; 9:8, 33; 9:6). Yet, the vast majority remain unresponsive to Jesus' message (cf. 11:16-19) and puzzled (12:23). Furthermore, if Jesus is the Messiah who is ushering in God's Kingdom, why are so many people (and the religious leaders) rejecting Jesus (cf. 9:34; 11:20-24; 12:14)?

### Read Matthew 13:1-23... The Parable of the Sower/Soils

1. Who is Jesus talking to and in what way is He talking to them? (vs. 1-3, 34)
2. Notice v. 9: ***“He who has ears, let him hear”***. In vs. 3-8, Jesus tells a parable. If you listened diligently and carefully, what “echoes” do you hear of the OT prophets?

Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Hosea
<p><i>“Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of the LORD? He sees many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.”</i> (Isaiah 42:18-20)</p> <p><i>“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”</i> (Isaiah 55:10-11)</p>	<p><i>“For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: ‘Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD; remove the foreskin of your hearts, O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.”</i> (Jer. 4:3-4)</p> <p><i>“Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not.”</i> (Jer. 5:21)</p>	<p><i>“Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see, but see not, who have ears to hear, but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.”</i> (Ezk. 12:2)</p> <p><i>“For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it.”</i> (Ezk. 36:9-10).</p>	<p><i>“I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. And in that day I will answer;’ declares the LORD, ‘I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, You are my people;’ and he shall say, ‘You are my God.”</i> (Hosea 2:20-23)</p>

3. What is the difference between the disciples and the crowds? (vs. 10-12; cf. 11:25-30)
4. Why is Jesus speaking in parables? (vs. 12-15)
5. Considering the OT prophets, we looked at, why are the disciples considered “blessed”? (vs. 16-17)
6. What does each soil in this parable mean? (vs. 18-23)
  - 1st soil
  - 2nd soil
  - 3rd soil
  - 4th soil
7. What is the difference between the “good soil” and the other soils? (Compare v. 19 and v. 23)



## Thinking & Living

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1. How does Jesus' parable of the sower help us understand why we see different responses to the Gospel?
2. What are the warnings from this parable?
3. What is encouraging about the parable?
4. Considering the first three soils: Can you relate to this? Are there people in your life who seem to be examples of this?
5. Considering the "good soil": Have you experienced this in your own life? Tell your story.
6. How can you become someone who "*understands*" (hears and sees?) (consider 11:28; 13:10).
7. What should you expect when you share the "*word of the kingdom*" with others? What should we expect when we share God's Word at St. Peters (Sundays, Winterlife, LIFE etc.)?
8. Why should you keep a) sharing, b) witnessing and c) inviting people?

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Considering our mission: *“make disciples of all nations”* (Matt. 28:19). Pray for good soil (that people will understand and apply the Gospel)...
  - In our children and youth ministries (Coolclub, Crew, Hood and Kid’s Church)
  - At LIFE and More-to-Life
  - Joining-In and “I Believe”
  - At our Sunday services (8am, 10am and 6pm)
  - In our personal evangelism (as we share the Gospel with our neighbours, friends and family)
  - Our missions partners
  - Ubabalo neThemba Church (as we make disciples in Masiphumalele with Bheki Dikeni)
  - As we plan a church plant in Muizenberg (with Jon Morrison)
- 2.** Pray that we won’t be discouraged when we experience the first “three soils”
- 3.** Praise God for the gift of hearing, understanding and applying the Gospel to our lives. God has revealed this incredible truth to you (cf. Matt. 11:27).
- 4.** Pray that we would continue in our walk with Jesus (be fruitful) and not stumble or fall away due to a) hardship, opposition and persecution and b) being consumed by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of wealth



**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 13:24-43**



The Parable of the Weeds,  
Mustard Seed and Yeast

Matthew 13:24-43

# The Parable of the Weeds, Mustard Seed and Yeast

## STUDY 15

1. The Gospel of Jesus is being proclaimed in every continent in the world. More people are trusting and following Jesus. Yet, many don't, and continue life ignoring Jesus. How are we supposed to understand this?



## Investigating

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### Read Matthew 13:24-43

1. Jesus gives us a series of parables to explain the current nature of the *"kingdom of heaven"* in the Messianic Age. To what is the *"Kingdom of Heaven"* compared? (vs. 24-25, 31, 33)
2. Looking at the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds (vs. 24-30)
  - a) What has happened in the master's field? (vs. 24-28)
  - b) What do the servants suggest? (v. 28)
  - c) What does the master command? (vs. 29-30)
  - d) Looking at vs. 36-43 - how should we understand the current Messianic age?
3. In the middle of the parable of the wheat and weeds, is the parable of the mustard seed and leaven (vs. 31-33)...
  - a) What do both parables have in common?
  - b) How does the "mustard seed" parable echo Daniel 4:20-22 and Ezk. 17:22-24?
  - c) How should we understand the current Messianic age?



## Thinking & Living

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Throughout Matthew's Gospel there has been an expectation of judgment with the arrival of God's Messiah: *"His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire"* (Matt. 3:12). Jesus should be eliminating His enemies, yet they remain. Moreover, His movement remains small. Jesus is acting in mercy, seeking and restoring the lost sheep of Israel (cf. Matt. 9:12-13; 11:1-6).

1. How do these three parables help us understand Jesus' actions, but also the current Messianic Age?
2. According to vs. 40-43, when will Jesus apply His winnowing fork of judgment?
3. How is Jesus' parable on the Wheat and Weeds ...
  - a) A corrective to trying to identify "weed" from "wheat" people?
  - b) A warning? *"Make every effort to confirm your calling and election"* (2 Pet. 1:10)
  - c) A comfort?
  - d) An encouragement to personal evangelism/witness?

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Pray that St Peter's church would continue their mission to grow God's church. That it would reach many people in the south and that God's word would be preached faithfully.
- 2.** Pray that we would be encouraged to spread the Word of God to others in our own lives and in doing so help grow God's church.
- 3.** Pray for Ubabalo neThemba as the church family in Masi that they would continue to spread God's word in their community and build God's church.
- 4.** Praise God that we have the wonderful message of the Gospel and that one day we will be able to see the glory and greatness of the work that Christ has done.



**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 13:44-46**



The Parable of the Hidden  
Treasure and the Pearl

Matthew 13:44-46

# The Parable of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

## STUDY 16

1. Have you ever played the game “Would you rather...”?

### HOW TO PLAY:

One person thinks of a “Would you rather...” statement to ask another person. For example: “Would you rather go skydiving or shark-cage diving?” The person they are asking HAS to choose which one they think is the better option. They then ask someone else in the group a different “Would you rather...” question.

## Investigating

Read Matthew 13:44-46

	Parable of The Treasure	Parable of the Pearl
What was found?		
What did the finder do next?		
What was the value of what was found?		
How would you translate these parables into the “would you rather” game we started with?		



## Thinking & Living

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- 1.** Do you think the actions of the man and the merchant make sense? Why or why not?
- 2.** Why do you think Jesus uses these two parables to describe the Kingdom of heaven to His disciples?
- 3.** Do you feel that you have had to choose between the Kingdom of Heaven and other things in life? What was the better choice to make and why? Share some examples that you feel comfortable with.
- 4.** As Jesus' disciples today, how can we grow our understanding of the value of the Kingdom?
- 5.** How can we show others the value of the Kingdom of Heaven?

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Pray that we as a Church would value the Kingdom of Heaven above all else in our lives. Pray that we would make good decisions about how to use our time, ability and finances best for the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 2.** Pray for our kids' ministries at St Peters, that we would faithfully teach our children about the value of the Kingdom and how they can participate in the Kingdom because of Jesus' work on the cross.
  - Pray for Coolclub (Gr. 1-4) on a Friday
  - Pray for Crew (Gr. 5-7) on a Friday
  - Pray for Hood (Gr. 8-12) on a Friday
  - Pray for Kids Church on a Sunday
  - Pray for our parents as they disciple their children in the value of the Kingdom
- 3.** Pray for our Missions Partners, Rod and Glenda Thomas, who are in Japan. Approximately 2% of the 160 million people in Japan consider themselves as "Christian". It is a country of tremendous wealth (3rd largest economy in the world) and a proud heritage, yet it is also a country with the highest suicide rate in the world. Pray that as God's people witness in Japan, more Japanese would discover the lasting treasure revealed in the Gospel of Jesus.
- 4.** Pray for our Gap Years and Interns (Tyla Gill, Carla Stephenson, Tim Gertzen, Stephan van Rooy and James Carter). Specifically, for wisdom as they consider and weigh the cost of full-time ministry.
- 5.** Pray for Jon Morrison: for wisdom, strength and provision ...
  - As Jon is working with Ryan Joseph and Ricardo Johnson to establish a Gospel work in Ocean View (with the possibility of developing into a church plant)
  - As Jon is preparing for the possibility of planting a church in Muizenberg



**SERMON NOTES ON MATTHEW 13:47-52**

The Parable of the Net



# The Parable of the Net

## STUDY 17

1. Do people always get what they deserve (justice) or are there instances where people get the opposite? What is the difference?

## Investigate

### Read Matthew 13:47-52

1. What is the kingdom of heaven like, in this parable? (v. 47)
2. When do the fishermen pull the net up to the shore? (v.48)
3. What happens to the fish caught in the net after it is pulled to shore? (v.48)
4. What interpretation does Jesus give of this parable? (vs.49-50)
5. When Jesus asks His disciples “Have you understood all these things?” to what is He referring? (vs. 51-52)
6. To what does Jesus compare disciples of the Kingdom? What are they supposed to do? (v. 52)



## Thinking & Living

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1. Who do the bad fish represent (vs. 47-48)? What's the difference?
2. Given the imagery in vs. 49-50, what is at stake in Jesus' mission (then and now)?
3. List some of the similarities between the parable of the net and Jesus' explanation of the parable of the weeds? (vs. 37-43)
4. Why do you think Jesus tells these two parables alongside the parable of the hidden treasure and the pearl?
5. How can we teach others, like our children, about the consequences of rejecting the King and the Kingdom, without losing sight of the joy and value of participating in the Kingdom?
6. How do the following quotes reflect what Jesus is speaking of in v. 52?  
  
*"In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed"*  
(Augustine, Quaestiones in Heptateuchum, 2:73 – 5th Century)
7. How are you personally training yourself to be a *"scribe... trained for the kingdom of heaven"*?
  - What role does Fellowship Group, family devotions and Sunday gatherings have?
  - How are you doing personal Bible reading? Have you considered using the *"Read Scripture"* app?
  - What role do Christian books have? Share with the group a book that possibly helped you understand the Bible more.

# Points to Pray

(now and during the week)...

- 1.** Praise God that He has not left us in the dark but revealed Himself through His Word (Old and New). Praise God that we have the opportunity to continue to grow in our relationship with Him through His Word.
- 2.** Pray that we, as St Peter's Church, would faithfully teach our children about both the consequences of not aligning with the Kingdom and the joys of participating in the Kingdom. Pray especially for the parents among us in this matter.
- 3.** Pray for the monthly outreach events that uBabalo neThemba organizes in partnership with Khayelitsha. Pray for the logistics of the events and the conversations that are had; especially considering the limiting factors of COVID-19.
- 4.** Pray for God's Kingdom to come in all its fullness: "*the end of the age*".
- 5.** Pray for those who teach in our Church community. Pray that they would be faithful to the whole Word of God and that their teaching would be fruitful.



