



JESUS OF NAZARETH
PRODUCTIVE HEARERS
MATTHEW 13:1-23
6-07-20

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light. We will continue to light the candle until we meet again.

Reflect

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. -Apostle Paul, Philippians 2:3

Welcome

Good Morning! Today is the day that the Lord has made and we will rejoice in it. Whether at Community CRC's building or at home, we will worship united in Christ. However, we are blatantly reminded this week that our worship is always with the backdrop of rebellion, sin, injustice and evil. These past 10 days or so have been extra tough on our nation and our city. We were like a tinder box ready to explode and George Floyd was the spark. Protests and riots spread across the nation, making their way even into our little town.

Covid-19 has disrupted our lives in many ways. It has been 12 weeks since we last had the opportunity to worship together. And even now, as many of us gather at the church building, there are precautions in place that continue the disruption. But is disruption all bad? I don't think so. First, it makes us re-look at things we may have taken for granted or hadn't looked at in a long time. Who will take corporate worship for granted again (at least not for a while)? Who will ever look at family and individual worship the same way again? Who will take the hug and handshake of hospitality as a given? Second, and more importantly, disruption breaks the status quo and our complacent comfortableness. "This is the way that we have always done it" went right out the window as none of us has ever navigated doing church as we have for the last 12 weeks and will continue to into the future. Things will not and cannot be the same. Again, this is not necessarily bad. CCRC has responded to this time with great patience and calmness and reasonableness, seeking to respond from a gospel position of both grace and truth. We have not been complainers or whiners. Finally, we are reminded and forced to deal with our responsibility as children of the kingdom of God and as citizens of the state and the empire. The complexity and nuance of such an interaction has been made much clearer as we make decisions that impact both.

More than ever, we need these words to be true: May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance today.

Candle Lighting – Light the candle again as a reminder that God is Light (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)!

It is our living as faithful citizens of the kingdom of God *in Christ* within the American empire that shines forth the light of Christ to the world. As we light the Christ candle, may it remind us of Jesus of Nazareth, a Middle Eastern, resurrected, Israelite Jew who subverted the Roman empire by kindling a countercultural movement of love and allegiance to him through faith and hope that God is for us.



Call to Worship: Habakkuk 3:17–19

Even in challenging times, Habakkuk reminds us that we can still rejoice in the Lord and find our strength and hope in him:

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

Song: How Great Is Our God -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKLQ1td3MbE>

*The splendor of a King, clothed in majesty.
Let all the Earth rejoice; all the Earth rejoice!
He wraps himself in light, and darkness tries to hide,
And trembles at His voice; trembles at His voice.*

*How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

*Age to age He stands, and time is in His hands.
Beginning and the end; the Godhead Three in One,
Father Spirit Son, the Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb*

*How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

*Name above all names, worthy of our praise,
My heart will sing, how great is our God.*

*How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

Psalm of Praise: Psalm 147:1-12 (note what God has done and what he takes pleasure in)

Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!



Song: Crown Him With Many Crowns -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuMh_ept-Js

*Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
Hark how the heav'nly anthem drowns all music but its own!
Awake, my soul and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King Thro' all eternity
Crown Him the Lord of life who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife for those He came to save!
His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring and lives that death may die.
Crown Him the Lord of love, behold His hands and side,
Rich wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends each burning eye at mysteries so bright.
Crown Him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime!
All hail Redeemer, hail! For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity.*

Law of Jesus: Matthew 7:24–27

We often think of law coming from the Old Testament but it is in the New Testament as well. Every command of Jesus and every time he talks about his disciples doing what he says is about law. As Reformed Christians, we strongly emphasize that grace always precede law; that what God has done for us always precedes what God demands of us; that the Good News of Jesus which saves us precedes the good works of faith that sanctifies us. These words of Jesus that we have previously looked at from the end of the Sermon on the Mount (full of law) tell us that law is important, that those who are disciples of Jesus who hears and does what he says is the one who are wise and withstand the storms of life (including the storm of the final judgement).

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.**”

Offering

We give because God first gave to us. We give cheerfully because God cheerfully gave to us. We give generously because God generously gave to us.

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Youth Celebration

Youth are a precious participant of community, including CCRC. The last four weeks we have seen that



they are vital because they are image bearers of God, they are passionate, they are agents of ministry now and because of they remind us of the value of relationships over organizations. Our fifth value is that they are culture connectors. Ministry with youth helps keep the church aware of the changes in culture and the local context. (Adapted from Shane Stacey)

Our culture is changing rapidly and it's easy for the Church to fall behind and lose touch. Ministry among youth can give the church a "first look" at coming changes. Ministry among youth gives us opportunity to learn how to bring the unchanging Word to an ever-changing culture. At the same time, schools are a great barometer of the real needs and values of a community— giving a snapshot of racial, social-economic, familial and value diversity in a community. Ministry to and with our youth at and through CCRC helps us connect to and stay abreast of the changing cultural context we live in.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 12:38-50

We are in the series, Jesus of Nazareth and focusing our attention on the Biblical Jesus as opposed to the Jesus' we make in our own image or in the image of the empire. Jesus has been healing, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and confronting the hard-hearted, merciless, legalistic and lost Pharisees. He has just made it clear that his true disciples are those who "do the will of the father" while those who are not in his family, do not. Jesus now turns his attention towards the crowds of people who have followed him down to the shore of the sea of Galilee that looks like this today:



Jesus gets into a boat, pushes off from shore a bit and addresses the crowd with a parable, which is a simple story to illustrate a moral truth or a spiritual lesson. Jesus is shifting his focus from the Pharisees to all people, telling them all who his true disciples are; who are the ones who are part of God's family; who are the ones who belong to the kingdom of God. If we really hear Jesus today, this message should stop us in our tracks to evaluate our own lives in humility and honestly.

Jesus is going to be telling them that there are four ways to distinguish legitimate children of God; three that are negative and one that is positive. For those of you who are farmers or gardeners, you're going to like this passage!

Please read Matthew 12:38-50

Gospel Message: Productive Hearers

Dirt, ground, soil. It's what we walk on, drive on, play on, build on and grow things in. There is hard ground and ground covered with asphalt and concrete. There is ground filled with rock, stone, and boulders. There is ground filled and covered with plants, trees, bushes, grass, gardens and orchards, pastures and lawns, baseball diamonds and track fields. Soil can be utilized for many things and it comes in many different conditions. It is the latter that our passage this morning focuses on, the soil's condition; its state of being specifically for growing plants and trees that produce vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and more. The soil in this parable represents your being, you – mind, body and soul and therefore is about the state of your being. The parable of the four soils is one of Jesus' more easily understood parables, largely because we live in an agricultural area and but also because it is one of the few sayings that Jesus fully interprets for us – so we know exactly what he wants us to know.



What is a parable again and why did Jesus use them so frequently? Jesus had the wisdom to simplify the profound spiritual truths he needed to share with humanity in the form of relatable stories that are easy to understand. A parable is a tale about a simple, common subject to illustrate a deeper, valuable moral lesson. The simple subject for us is planting and growing for a harvest. The deeper, valuable moral lesson is about the eternal state of our being. The definition of the word “parable” is literally to place alongside for the purpose of comparison. **A parable utilizes a full story to produce a spiritual lesson, whereas a proverb, metaphor, simile, or figure of speech centers usually on a word, phrase or sentence.** In verses 10-17, Jesus tells us he uses parables to show that some people will understand them, hear their message, see what they mean and turn towards their truth (v. 15). Others will continue to not understand, hear, see or turn. The parable then becomes a Christian litmus test (a decisively indicative test) to show who were his disciples and in the kingdom of God. They were the ones who understands the parable, takes it to heart and does what it says. So, it’s not just about understanding the parable but taking it to heart and allowing it to form us so that we might be more fully obedient in faith to Jesus. This is important and challenging.

Jesus’s way, truth and life are often counter to ours and hard to hear because it means we need to change. Jesus’ way, truth and life are perfect. We are not. We are the ones who need to change, to turn to Jesus in faith, to humbly confess and repent and believe Jesus. This parable was hard hitting for Jesus’ hearers then and it is hard hitting for us today. As such, there is a temptation to not take seriously its serious message or to minimize its major application or to ignore its insightful wisdom and warning in order to avoid the parables meaning and purpose. Remember, Jesus has been boldly and courageously and graciously and truthfully letting the legalistic Pharisees know that they were currently not part of the kingdom of God nor one of God’s children as they thought they were. Jesus is now backing off from focusing on the Pharisees and focusing more generally about who is in the kingdom and part of the family of God and who is not. He is exposing the pendulum of lostness that the Pharisees were on and the way of salvation off the pendulum found only in and through Jesus of Nazareth. He was extending the conversation to all people for the Pharisees are not alone on the pendulum – there are Gentiles too.

The parable we are focusing on today is a story about a sower sowing seeds and the eventual fate of those seeds. This particular parable’s pattern is: location – destroying agent – result. That is, the location is the kind of soil the seeds encounter. The destroying agent is something associated with that sort of soil that somehow counters the purpose of the seed and soil. And the result is the end state of the seed in that soil with its particular counter-condition. In this parable, **there is one soil that stands out from the other three that Jesus ultimately is drawing our attention to – the fourth, or good soil that allows the seed to grow and produce fruit.** Note: the seed in all four scenarios represents “the word of the kingdom” or in other words, the Bible or the word of God or the gospel. Thus, ultimately this parable is about hearing God’s word and doing it.

The first group of seeds and soil. Some seeds fell “on the path” that Jesus says represents people who “hear the word of the kingdom and do not understand it.” The result is the seed is “snatched away” by the destroying agent, “the evil one.” What is Jesus saying and/or referring to? These are people who do not believe Jesus of Nazareth is God’s Good News for us. They deny that Jesus is Savior. They deny that Jesus is Lord of lords. They deny that Jesus is King of kings. These are the hard-hearted, lost younger sons who reject the Father, reject Jesus’ teaching and do whatever they want. These are the hard-hearted, lost and religious elder sons who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom by

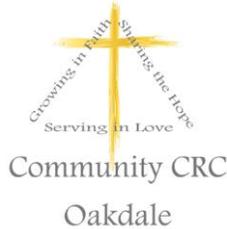


turning grace into law; who falsely think they are righteous because of what they have done and not because of what Jesus has done; who make salvation about earning God's favor instead of receiving God's favor in Christ. These are the atheists who deny there is even a God. These are people who are openly hostile to Christianity and laugh at it because it is silly, foolish and childish, an antiquated relic from another age. These are people unchanged by Jesus of Nazareth and their unbelief reveals it. They engage Jesus on their own terms. Discuss how you have experienced this type of lost person and how we sometimes can act this way.

The second group of seeds and soil. Some seeds fall on "rocky ground" that Jesus says represents people who "immediately receive it with joy" but "fall away" when the destroying agent of difficulty and persecution comes. What is Jesus saying and/or referring to? These are people who never give up their idols of comfort and security; who mistake the good life of the American Dream with the gospel life of the kingdom of God; who think their best life is now; who cannot accept that cancer, being fired, being unemployed, being divorced, being hated by others, being poor, being marginalized, being depressed, being uncomfortable or unsafe because of Jesus have any place in their Christian experience. These are the hard-hearted, younger sons who want the best of both the empires of the world and the kingdom of God, who want their inheritance and all the pleasures of life now, who want to do what they want but also don't want to go to hell. These are the hard-hearted, elder sons who think all their dutiful and merciless obedience earns them a good life, a comfortable life, a secure life. These people are unchanged by Jesus of Nazareth and persecution and difficulty reveals it. They engage Jesus ultimately on their terms and abandon him because following him is too hard. Discuss how you have experienced this type of lost person and how we sometimes can act this way.

The third group of seeds and soil. Some seeds fall "among thorns" that Jesus says represents people who are "choked" by the destructive agent of the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." The end result is the seeds being "unfruitful." What is Jesus saying and/or referring to? These are people who are more focused on their health than on Jesus; who are more focused on their looks than on Jesus, who are more focused of being popular than on Jesus; who are more focused on wealth than on Jesus; who are more focused on being successful in business than on Jesus; who are more focused on their possessions than on Jesus; who are more focused on politics than on Jesus; who are more focused on social injustices than on Jesus; who care more for the things of the world than the truths, ways and life of Jesus. These are the hard-hearted, younger sons who liberalize their understanding of the Bible by missing truth and cherry-picking verses out of context to wrongfully support their worldly agendas. These are the hard-hearted, elder sons who legalize their understanding of the Bible by missing grace and seeing everything through the lens of duty and reward. These people are unchanged by Jesus of Nazareth and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches reveals it. They engage Jesus ultimately on their terms and follow him only when convenient or it fits in their schedule. Discuss how you have experienced this type of lost person and how we sometimes can act this way.

All three types of soils do not produce a plant that is productive. All three represent people who are lost. All three types of unproductive people are not saved. All three types of people reject or deny Jesus and reject, ignore or minimize what they consider his "hard sayings." They are hard because they counter their lost kind of thinking; their younger brother or elder brother thinking; their liberal or legal thinking; their bad soil thinking. The hard-hearted, lost younger brothers do not like the truths and ways of Jesus that call for the obedience of faith; that call them to submit to Jesus as their Lord; that



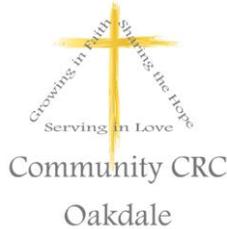
calls them to fight and flee from sexual immorality; that defines marriage as between a male and female for life; that defines gender as male and female, given and not chosen; that calls them to meet together regularly, that tells them to use their gifts for kingdom purposes within the church; that calls them to be in the world but not of the world, that calls them to beware of wealth. The hard-hearted, elder brothers do not like the truths or ways of Jesus that calls them to love their enemies; to never avenge nor seek revenge; to not condemn; to live peaceably with all; to not be against but to be for others; to hold no record of wrongs; to bless those who curse you; that calls them to be compassionate to their neighbor; that tells them to do good to those who hate them; to think of others better than themselves; to be humble, sacrificial, serving, generous and merciful; that calls them to be aware of the dangers of wealth.

What you consider to be the hard teachings of Jesus reveals your discipleship blind spots or maybe even lostness. What are a few sayings of Jesus that you feel are difficult to do? What does this reveal about our proclivity to fall back to the pendulum and our need to repent and turn back to the gospel?

The fourth group of seeds and soil. Some seeds fall on soil that Jesus says is “good” soil that represents people who “hears the word and understands it” and “bears fruit” a hundred, sixty and thirty times more. This soil is in stark contrast to the other three and is the main focus of the parable. These are the people who listen to Jesus and seek to do and be what he says. These are the people who are in the kingdom of God, who are God’s children, who are disciples of Jesus of Nazareth; who seek first the kingdom of God, who delight themselves in the Lord; who are convicted when confronted with the hard truths of scripture and confess their wrong thinking and/or wrong doing and repent; who fight to stay off the pendulum of lostness through preaching the gospel to themselves; who receive the gift of grace of the gospel and allow that to fuel and foster the good works of faith; who strive to incorporate both the truths of Jesus and the grace of Jesus, the ways of Jesus and the life of Jesus. These people have been changed by Jesus of Nazareth and their good fruit reveals it. They engage Jesus ultimately on his terms. Discuss how this group is for Jesus in a different way than the previous three.

The fruit of the seed that was planted (the word of God or the gospel) in the good soil is a life of complete surrender and delightful obedience to Jesus of Nazareth. It is a life of humble submission to the truths of Jesus, the ways of Jesus and the life of Jesus. It is a person who displays the fruit of the Spirit in the midst of disagreement, protest, antagonism, hostility and anger; who demonstrate the love of Jesus in the way of Jesus with both truth and grace; who exhibit eternal joy in the midst of temporary suffering; who are peaceful people in the midst of verbal and physical violence; who are patient people in the midst of hurry and over reaction; who are kind people in the midst of meanness; who are people seeking the good rather than the bad; who are faithful to Jesus of Nazareth amidst those who are not; who are gentle amidst harshness and roughness; who are self-controlled amidst chaos, disorder, turmoil and mayhem. These are the productive hearers that define who are disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let’s Pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you that no matter where we are, you are willing to forgive us when we turn to you in faith and submit to you as our truth, as our way and as our life. Show us our lostness or where we tend to fall back onto the pendulum so that we might repent and live more credibly and coherently as your disciples in today’s world. Amen.



Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming (1 Corinthians 11:23b-25) – Paraphrased

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, "this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, "this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins."

Remember and believe the body and blood of Jesus was given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song: In Christ Alone -- <https://youtu.be/ENTL li4GbE>

*In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song.
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace; when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.
My Comforter, my All in All; here in the love of Christ I stand.*

*In Christ alone who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save,
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied,
For every sin on Him was laid. Here in the death of Christ I live.*

*There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day, up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory, sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ!*

*No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me.
From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand.
Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus: Matthew 28:18-20 (Paraphrased)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus. Therefore, as we are sent into the world by him, let us make disciples of all, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us. And let us remember and treasure that Jesus is with us always, even to the end of the age. Amen!