

Family Bible Study

7/26/2026

9. The fourth “word picture” is of the Kingdom as a fine pearl, which a pearl merchant sells all he has to acquire. This parable is like the previous one, except that upon purchasing the desired object, he can’t do anything else with it. He’s sold everything, presumably all his other pearls, his very business. How is this like the kingdom? How is it not?
10. Lastly, the kingdom is likened to a great fishing net that captures “good things and bad things.” One imagines the net hauling in old boots and tin cans, along with cod and bass. And after it’s hauled in, the fishermen sort through the catch, separating the fish that are good for eating and throwing out everything else. Actually, the word Matthew uses for “all kinds” is the same word from which we get our English word “genus.” It also could be translated as “tribe,” so that the net gathers all tribes, all kinds of people. How does this inform our interpretation of this parable? Compare this image to the heavenly vision in Revelation 7:9?
11. What does this fishing net story have to do with the Kingdom? Is this parable about the Kingdom itself or rather about the coming of the kingdom and the judgment it brings? How do you feel about the idea of the angels judging people, separating the good from the bad?
12. At the end of this kaleidoscope of images, Jesus asks his audience, “Do you understand all this? (v51)” How do they respond? Do you think the disciples are being honest? If you hadn’t heard about the interpretation of these parables before, would you have caught on to what Jesus was talking about?
13. Jesus makes one last comparison in this lesson, likening the “scribe” or student who’s been prepared for the kingdom to “the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” How do you make sense of this? What is “new”? What is “old”?
14. Does the “new” and the “old” refer to something in particular in Jesus’ day? If so, what? Or do they refer to a tension or dynamism that persists in Christianity, i.e. the ongoing challenge of presenting the old and new of the faith together, to present the “old” as something new and refreshing (timely), and the new as rooted in ancient wisdom (timeless)?



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Five Parables of the Kingdom

³¹ Jesus put before the crowds another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field. ³² It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶ on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸ when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. ⁵⁰ The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹ “Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” ⁵² And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Questions to Wonder with Kids

In today's reading from Matthew, Jesus talks to his followers about the "kingdom of heaven." In this, he wasn't talking about heaven or life after death; he was talking about how things will be when God rules on the earth, as He does in heaven, as King. To help people to understand what this looks like, Jesus told stories, comparing the Kingdom to things they were familiar with.

- In the first parable, Jesus says the Kingdom is like a mustard seed. A mustard seed is really small, but it grows into a big bush, where birds can hide. Can you think of other things that start out small but become really big? That's like the Kingdom, Jesus says—it's starts out like a small seed and grows to a big bush.
- In the next story, Jesus compares the Kingdom to yeast that gets mixed in with a whole lot of dough, enough to make bread to feed over 100 people! Do you know how yeast works? Ask a parent if you don't. I wonder what it is about yeast and how it works that reminds Jesus of the Kingdom...
- In the next two stories, Jesus says the Kingdom is like buried treasure that a farmer finds in a field and like a beautiful pearl that a pearl trader finds. Both the farmer and the trader are so excited that they sell everything they have to gain the treasure. Have you ever wanted something so bad that you'd be willing to give up everything else you own to get it? How is that like how we should feel about the Kingdom?
- In the last little story, Jesus says the Kingdom is like a fishing net cast out into the water that catches all sorts of things, good fish and trash. After it's full, the fishermen have to sort out the good fish from the trash. Jesus says this is like what it will be like at the end of the age when the angels will sort righteous people from evil people. I wonder what makes someone righteous.... I wonder what makes someone evil...
- Why do you suppose Jesus cared so much about helping people to understand what the Kingdom is like? I wonder why He thinks the Kingdom is so important for us....

Questions for Adults

1. Who is Jesus talking to in this passage? What is he talking about?
2. How would you describe what Jesus meant by "kingdom of heaven / Kingdom of God"?
3. Jesus offers five parables or "word pictures" here. The first is a comparison of the kingdom with a mustard seed, a common plant in Jesus' day that was effectively a weed. Why would anyone intentionally sow *a weed*?
4. In what ways is the kingdom like a mustard seed?
5. The mustard plant grows to maybe 3 feet tall in optimal conditions. Yet Jesus says that it becomes a tree that is home to many birds (v32). How do you make sense of this?
6. The next word picture is the kingdom as yeast. "Yeast" back then didn't refer to domesticated baker's yeast that we buy in packets today at the grocery store. It was essentially mold or moldy bread. And the woman mixes—literally "hides"—it in three "measures" of flour (16 five-pound bags) which is enough to make bread to feed over 100 people! What do you suppose the flour represents? What is the yeast/mold that is mixed in? How is it like the kingdom?
7. Next is a comparison of the kingdom to buried treasure. Such treasure was not as rare as we might think. Israel had a long history of being conquered by different people. And when an Israelite saw conquerors on the horizon, the only way to protect their property was to bury it in one of their fields. But if the owner died or was forced to leave, the treasure would be left for a lucky new owner to uncover when they plowed the field. In this instance, however, the finder is not the owner of the field, so he has to buy the field to get the treasure. He does so willingly, selling all he has. How is the kingdom like this buried treasure?
8. What has God asked you to give up in order to purchase the "treasured field"? What is God asking you to "sell" in order to grow close to God, to live more fully in his kingdom?