

A Heart Condition 12-12-04

Matthew 13:10-17 (NIV)

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" ¹¹ He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. ¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

I do not think I really understood this passage until I began preparing this message. It had always baffled me. In fact, I even considered jumping over it, since we did the parable of the sower that surrounds it. However, that would be the first passage we would skip, and I just knew the Lord wanted me to preach on it. Every time I read the passage, it left me wondering, "Why doesn't Jesus want them to be converted?" It sounds like Jesus is saying that He teaches with parables because He does not want them to see or hear. I went to prayer over this and soon it began to become clear. I began to see and hear. That is what this passage is all about, seeing and hearing. The very wording of this passage made me experience what it was about before I could share it with you.

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

Jesus had just shared the parable of the farmer who sowed the seed in the various soils. Though this is the first parable in Matthew, it sounds like parables were His most common teaching tool. So the disciples are asking outright, "Why do you do that Jesus?" We probably would have asked the same thing. We would have wondered why Jesus did not just say things plainly. (Mark 4:33-34)

¹¹ He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

The kingdom of heaven is the rule and reign of Christ in the hearts of men, now and throughout time and eternity. This kingdom has some secrets that you can gain knowledge about. Let me be clear that this is not some secret magic phrase or technique. It is not something you can plunk down \$5Gs for and then master. I know a number of people who have done that and their life is just like yours or mine. They still catch a cold and have to work for a living. They do not always get their way. They are not able to manipulate cosmic power. They are just \$5G poorer and a little more confused. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Commented [notes1]: ³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. Mark 4:33-34 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. ² Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. 2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

The knowledge of the kingdom is free, but then you end up giving your life for it. (Mark 10:39) Those who are willing to hear and see find that one of the secrets is that giving is glorious. (Acts 20:35) Jesus expressed His deep knowledge of that on the cross. (John 10:17) He freely gave His all to make the secrets free to all. That is because God loves the world, rich and poor, of every language and culture. The Apostle Paul wrote, "There is no favoritism with Him." (Ephesians 6:9) If it cost money, then the poor could not afford to learn these secrets. If it took great intelligence, only those with high I.Q.s could learn it. If it took anything that anyone else does not possess, you could boast about your ability to know these secrets. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31) That bottom line availability is a pretty humbling reality. The fact of the matter is, Jesus warned that wealth was often a hindrance. (Mark 10:23) Worldly wisdom can be misleading. (Isaiah 47:10)

You might be thinking, "Pastor, what in the world are you talking about? What secret knowledge of the kingdom are you referring to?" Jesus was speaking of the teaching in His parables. In the last parable, He was referring to conditions in the heart of man. Other parables teach on other topics, but they are all things that cannot be known by the world. They are eternal truths that intersect this plane of existence. They can only be discerned by those humble enough to receive and be changed by them. (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Jesus said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them." It is given to all who are willing to receive it humbly and reverently. ⁹ He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. ¹⁴ The Lord tells his secrets to those who respect him; he tells them about his agreement. Psalms 25:9(NIV), 14 (NCV) The secrets are withheld from those who are too proud to accept the humbling truth of the gospel. (1 Peter 5:5)

¹² Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Once you humbly and reverently begin to accept the secret truths of the kingdom of heaven, you are given more. They build on one another. You have to understand some basic ones before other deeper truths are added. You have to understand Jesus paid it all, before you can really understand that there is no condemnation to those who believe. You have to understand that God is sovereign over all things before you can believe all things work together for good to those who love God. As you build, secret upon secret, kingdom truth upon kingdom truth, you begin to build up this incredible abundance that is reflected in your love, divine wisdom, and joy. You start to realize how blessed you are. You begin seeing God's glory in all the earth. When a convicting truth confronts you, you realize it is for your good, to bless your life and add to your abundance and you have eyes to see and ears to hear. (Deuteronomy 4:40)

You can recognize your brothers and sisters that have stepped into this abundance. They are more concerned about you than they are about themselves. They are encouragers and always have something to share about the goodness of God in their life. When they hear a parable, whether it from God's word or by life experience, they

Commented [notes3]: ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. John 10:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Ephesians 6:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ²⁶ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: ¹⁰ You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Isaiah 47:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 1 Corinthians 4:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: ⁵ Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 1 Peter 5:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: ⁴⁰ Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time. Deuteronomy 4:40 (NIV)

look for eternal truths. They seek out secrets of the kingdom so that they can add to their abundance. (Matthew 13:52) The wonderful attributes of God that they discovered in some dark trial are on their lips to help you through your trial. They dig into God's Word and mine its riches like hidden treasure. They have profound insights because they listen to the Spirit as they read. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

Commented [notes13]: ⁵² He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."
Matthew 13:52 (NIV)

When one's eyes and ears are open, life is rich with meaning. Experiences and circumstances become parables. (Psalm 139:16) An ear infection becomes a reminder that I have been ignoring what I have been hearing from God and His word. A record snowstorm on the day of a big event speaks of God's displeasure with it. A sudden sense of dread can be a warning to keep you from danger. The daily events of life are often parables. Now, do not take these examples and interpret those circumstances to mean the same thing. Only the Spirit of God can correctly interpret them. Only those with eyes to see and ears that hear will learn from them, and when they do, they learn the secrets of the kingdom. (1 Corinthians 2:6-7)

Commented [notes14]: ¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
1 Corinthians 2:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
Psalms 139:16 (NIV)

Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Those without the Spirit will never understand. Hear how the Apostle Paul puts it. *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.* 1 Corinthians 2:14 (NIV) They do not have the Spirit. Even if they do have some sense of truth, a continual rejection of the Holy Spirit's conviction will cause them to abandon what they do have. In Jesus' words, *"Even what he has will be taken from him."* That is their choice, and so the secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom are kept from them. The abundance that they could have in Christ is foolishness to them. (1 Corinthians 1:18) The parables in each day are incomprehensible.

Commented [notes16]: ⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.
1 Corinthians 2:6-7 (NIV)

¹³ *This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

When we were in Matthew 11, we saw that it was God's deliberate plan is to reveal truth to the simple and hide the truth from the wise and learned. (Matthew 11:25) Those that receive the truth like children are going to take what they receive and let it affect their lives. The wise and learned will only become more accountable for rejecting the truth because of their pride. That is why truth is presented in such a way that they will not hear or understand. That is why life is so filled with parables. If you are unable to receive the truth and be changed, you will not understand the parables God sends you. If you are humble enough to receive it like a child, you will hear and add that knowledge to your abundance. (Luke 19:26)

Commented [notes17]: ¹⁸ For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.
1 Corinthians 1:18 (KJV)

Commented [notes18]: ²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.
Matthew 11:25 (NIV)

¹⁴ *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'*

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 and applying it to those people who would not understand the parables. The fulfillment of this prophecy was not only applicable in Jesus' day, but all throughout time. Those who cannot hear are always confronted

Commented [notes19]: ²⁶ "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.
Luke 19:26 (NIV)

with the truth, yet they cannot understand it. They are always seeing truth but never perceiving it. (John 1:9) That is not because it is presented in a way they cannot perceive. That might be our understanding at the first reading of the prophecy, but look closer. God tells us through Isaiah that it is because their hearts are calloused. How do you develop a calloused heart? Calluses develop from a continual resistance. My fingertips become calloused when I continually push them against steel guitar strings. Hearts become calloused when after continual resistance of the Holy Spirit they become thick and insensitive. (Psalm 119:70) The more calloused, the less sensitive. Do you see the deliberate choice?

Commented [notes20]: ⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.[John 1:9 (NIV)]

Commented [notes21]: ⁷⁰ Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law. Psalms 119:70 (NIV)

"Callused" speaks to me of the faithfulness of the Spirit of God. It says that the Spirit of God has been faithfully confronting their heart again and again and again. He has confronted them so many times that they have become callused rather than yielding to His loving conviction. (Romans 2:5)

Commented [notes22]: ⁵ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Romans 2:5 (KJV)

The passage goes on to say, "...they have closed their eyes." It does not say their eyes were forced closed. This, too, is a deliberate choice. (2 Thessalonians 2:10) I am often amazed at people, when all around them is blessing and goodness, and all they are willing to see is evil. Their eyes are closed to all the goodness. They cannot see the glory of God in all the earth. (Numbers 14:21) The secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom are hidden from them. Complaint after selfish complaint flows from their lips. Instead of sharing secrets of the kingdom, they complain about life, and a complaint about life is ultimately a complaint against God. It reminds me of the first complaint, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Genesis 3:12 (NIV) Adam was saying, "God, it is all your fault that I sinned." Every complaint is a complaint against God, because everything is allowed by the hand of God. (Isaiah 46:10) To be sure, it is not God's desire for evil to cause destruction, but God has allowed it for a time and will be glorified in the end by causing all things to work together for good to those who love Him. (Romans 8:28)

Commented [notes23]: ¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: ²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, Numbers 14:21 (NIV)

Those who cannot hear have callused their hearts and closed their eyes because they do not want to hear, see, or understand. (Jeremiah 5:21-22a; 6:10) They do not want to turn and be healed. They have chosen to live in the sickness of evil. "Jesus, why do you speak in parables?" "So you will understand, but those who choose to harden their hearts and close their eyes will not." (Proverbs 8:17)

Commented [notes25]: ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. Isaiah 46:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (NIV)

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Commented [notes27]: ²¹ Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear: ²²Should you not fear me?" declares the LORD. "Should you not tremble in my presence? Jeremiah 5:21-22 (NIV)

Those eyes that see and ears that hear are blessed. It is not just that they chose to accept the convicting work of the Spirit and to go on hungering and thirsting, but that God added His blessing to them. (Matthew 5:6) It is a blessing that began with the convicting work of the Spirit. Instead of resisting and becoming callused, they allowed Him to penetrate their heart. That is the first of many blessings including the blessing of ears that hear and eyes that see.

Commented [notes28]: ¹⁰ To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it. Jeremiah 6:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: ¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. Proverbs 8:17 (NIV)

Consider what those disciples that Jesus spoke these words to were seeing. Since Adam left the Garden, spiritual man has desired restoration of friendship with God.

Commented [notes30]: ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew 5:6 (NIV)

Here was God incarnated as a man, once again walking and talking with us. The prophets over the millenniums had dreamed of this day. They had glimpses of it, prophesied bits and pieces of what it would be like, and there these disciples were seeing and hearing it as it unfolded. (1 Peter 1:10-12) What would Micah have given to have stood with the Shepherds at the manger in Bethlehem and see his prophecy come to pass? (Micah 5:2) What would Isaiah have given to see the sign we spoke of a few weeks ago as it was fulfilled, "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a child; and you will call His name Emmanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) What would Daniel have given to see the fulfillment of the 69 weeks, when the Messiah would be cut off, but not for Himself? (Daniel 9:26a) They could see these wonders in the distance, but how they longed to live in the days when God would walk the earth. Imagine hearing explanations of life from the lips of the Son of God.

Wait a minute! You can! You can pick up your Bible and read what He said for yourself. You can read the secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom when you read Jesus' words in the Gospels. Then why aren't we all devouring the Word of God on a daily basis? Could it be that we have developed some calluses of our own? Could it be that we have closed our eyes because we want to go our own way and not be interrupted by the Spirit of God and the secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom?

In our little community, we have people paying these enormous prices to hear secrets that are not worth a penny. They are desperate to hear secrets that will empower them to be greater, to have more power and knowledge than others. It is often a motivation of pride. All the while, the true secrets of the knowledge of the kingdom of heaven are available for us. They are there for the taking, in abundance. We just do not like the self-sacrificial tone. Could that be why we do not pick up our Bibles more often? That is a very shortsighted perspective. We do not realize the riches that await us down that path and in this life. A heart sensitized to the Spirit, ears that are willing to hear, and eyes that are willing to receive will have in abundance. The prophets would give anything to be in our shoes, to live in these days with the Bible in our hands and the Spirit in our hearts.

If we recognize our hearts have become callused, we need to break up that unplowed ground and seek the Lord until he showers us with righteousness. (Hosea 10:12) If we do not realize the abundance we have been missing, we need to pray for a heart sensitive to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to open our eyes. We need to ask God to interpret the parables all around us each day, and the deeper truths in the word of God that we have been skimming over because we did not understand. Then, write down those secrets as God reveals them to you, and build upon them. Before you know it, you will find you have abundance. You will find the earth is filled with the glory of God. You will have a treasure that cannot be stolen, secret knowledge shared only with those that have eyes to see. That is God's heart for us. This passage is not saying that Jesus deliberately hid things from some people, but that many refuse to see and be healed. Do not fall into that category. Live in abundance. (John 10:10)

Commented [notes31]: ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. 1 Peter 1:10-12 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: ² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah 5:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: ²⁶ And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: Daniel 9:26 (KJV)

Commented [notes35]: ¹² Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. Hosea 10:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: ¹⁰ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10 (KJV)