

Matthew 13:51-52

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[0 : 00] You'll have mentioned it's a very short passage, but I think it's the hardest one we've looked at all series. I still have questions about it myself, so don't worry if you still have questions. But, and quite ironically, given that I don't understand all of it, Jesus starts with, have you understood all these things? That's an important question after you've been teaching, isn't it? I do some teaching, at a center I teach some Greek, just some basic Greek, and I have to always just make sure that people understand what I'm saying. Every new concept I give them, I have to say, do you understand? And I have to check with them that they understand. But when Jesus tells his disciples here, have you understood all these things? They say yes. People often say yes straight away, and then you ask them a question about it, and it comes clear they didn't really understand it, so they at least think they understood it, and we certainly hope that they understood it. But let's think about what he means by all these things. It's good to think about that. All these things is everything he's been saying so far about the fact that he is king. He hasn't said so quite as explicitly as he would at the end of the book yet. He has said that the kingdom of heaven has come, or is at hand, which means that he's saying that he is king and he has come.

And at the end of the book he will say that explicitly, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And so all this is explaining the fact that Jesus is king. He's not saying I would like you to think of me as king, or I can be your king if you want me to. He's saying I am the king. And this is what you have to deal with as king. And he's told these stories, hasn't he, these images of what it means for him to be king. He has started with the parable of the different soils, explaining that you need to listen very carefully to Jesus, making sure you understand what he is saying, listening very carefully. And we have the parable of the wheat and the weeds that explain that his mission is to combat evil. He is going to do away, eradicate evil. But he will do it in his way, which won't necessarily be the way we would have expected, but he will do it. But of course we have to make sure that we are not among the evil ones that he will do away with. We have to make sure that we are among the sons of the kingdom, and we have to trust our king to eradicate evil. And we saw the mustard seed and the leaven that taught us not to underestimate the king, didn't we?

It may look very small, everything he's doing, but it will grow to a tree that will attract birds from all over the place. A bird can't really build a nest on a seed. But you can bet that plenty of birds can build their nests in a massive mustard tree. And so it doesn't look like much, but it will be much greater than you can imagine. And like leaven, you can't really see what it's doing, but it is working. You can guarantee it is impacting the whole batch as the leaven, the yeast, is in there. So we've seen that this is a life-changing message. And it doesn't look like it, it doesn't necessarily impress everybody.

But don't underestimate it, it is life-changing. That's what he announced to a whole crowd. Then to a smaller crowd who came back to find out more, to his own disciples, possibly only the 12 disciples we know about, possibly a bigger group, we're not sure, but he just calls them his disciples. He tells them more. We hear about the treasure, that this kingdom is a treasure, that the news of Jesus as king is incredibly precious. And it's because he is like a merchant who has come to seek the pearl. He is like a merchant who has given up everything to buy this pearl. And then last week we saw, well, who is in the pearl? Well, lots of fish. But some people just get dragged along in the net, but actually are bad fish.

They haven't truly been transformed by this good news. They turn out in the end to be bad fish. And so that there is a call, not only to be a part of the church, which is very important.

[4 : 41] We want to be caught in the net. We want to place ourselves under the authority of Jesus, in the net, but not only being dragged along, but actively saying, no, I want to be a follower of Jesus. I want to trust in him. All these things. Have you understood all these things is what Jesus is

asking? And they say yes, which is wonderful. It is possible to understand these things if we listen very carefully. But this is what you need to know now. Now that you've heard all these things, now you need to understand something else. You need to understand that if you understand these things, you are being trained. Look at that verse 2. Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom. Understanding this means that you are being trained, or the word literally is being disciplined, or taught, or trained, or for the kingdom of heaven. You're being trained. Which means that you don't have the option of ignoring it, or rejecting it. If you understand these things, you can't just leave them to one side.

I don't know how many of you watch Strictly Come Dancing, but when you do, you'll often watch videos of the celebrities with their dancing teachers in their dancing studios, training all week learning the dance. You never see a celebrity saying, no, I refuse to do what you're telling me to do. And you never see them just ignoring the teacher. If they do, they have fundamentally misunderstood their relationship to the trainer. They are there to learn, they are there to be taught, they are there to be trained. And so they have to do what their trainer tells them to do. If they reject it, or ignore it, they have misunderstood what's going on. They haven't really understood. If you really understand what Jesus is saying, understand that you are being trained. Jesus' message is that he is the king, and he's explaining what that means.

He has demonstrated that very clearly in the resurrection. So Jesus here is training us to live for him, to live with him as our king. It means that if we're being trained, we also don't have the option of merely admiring him. If you go back to that dancing studio, they don't reject it, they don't ignore it, but neither do they just stand back and say, wow, that was fantastic. As they watch the trainers show them the moves. Or they don't even just say, that's very interesting what you did there. That is not enough. That is just as bad as rejecting it, or ignoring it. If all you do is say, wow, that looks fantastic, you still misunderstand your relationship to the one who is training you. You're being trained.

And if your only reaction to that is, oh, how fascinating, or how wonderful, then you have missed the point. You need to understand that Jesus is training you for the kingdom with these parables. The second thing you need to understand is, you're being given treasure.

This teaching is treasure. The master of a house who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old. You're being given new treasure. It is new treasure that goes along with a lot of old treasure. People often refer to the law and the wisdom of the Old Testament as treasure. And here Jesus is giving new treasure. Not treasure to replace the old treasure, but treasure that goes on top of it. Treasure that develops it. Treasure that continues. It is more treasure. It is just adding to your wealth. Not diverting from it, but just developing it. You're being given new treasure. And what wonderful treasure it is. It is wonderful to have a king who will eradicate all evil and suffering. It is wonderful to have a king who is doing far more than you can imagine. It is wonderful to have a king who is precious beyond words and who finds you so precious that he gave up everything for you. And one who will ultimately divide between the false believers and true believers and bring true justice. You are being given treasure as you listen to Jesus and as you understand what he is saying. So if you understand you are being trained. Don't ignore it. Don't reject it. Don't just only admire it. Be trained and you are being given treasure. And finally, if you understand, share the wealth. The treasure, this master of the house, brings the treasure out. The word is literally thrown out. He doesn't just bring it out. He's throwing it out of the place. He's sharing it. He's sharing the wealth.

[10:07] Back in chapter 12, there's a similar parable about somebody throwing out treasure. And there Jesus makes the connection between that and speaking. The throwing out of the treasure is like speaking.

Now here he is probably talking to his disciples who he is training to be teachers, to be what he calls scribes. The scribes are the people who taught the law. So he is training them especially for not just being disciples of the kingdom, but people who will disciple others in the kingdom. So they are being trained to teach as well as to know what this treasure. And so he is explaining, if you know this treasure, then you will throw this treasure out to people. You will share this news. You will share the wealth. Now it's not everybody here who will be teachers or scribes as he calls them here. But for everybody, it at least means this, I think, that those who understand these things, all these things, and those who understand that they are being trained, they will speak like subjects of the king.

If you understand these things, you will speak like somebody who is a subject of Jesus the king. You will sound like his people. What you say will match the things that he said. What you say will match everything he was about. These things will affect everything about you, down to the very depth of your being, and affect every aspect of your life, even to just your speaking. Something as every day and every moment as our speaking. These things will affect your whole life and permeate even the way you speak.

So the treasure will come out. It will spill out as the treasure has gone in. As you have understood, as you have been trained, the treasure will then spill out in the way we speak.

But it is not a matter of forcing it. It's not a matter of, well, I will just try and speak like Christians speak. And I will sort of learn the lingo, and it will all be fine. The point is, the main question is, not can you throw treasure out really well, the point, the real question is, have you understood all these things? That is the key question. The key question is, do you see what these things mean?

[12 : 56] Will you submit to Jesus as your king? Not will you take the option of having him as your king? He is your king.

He has made that announcement very clear. The question is, will you live like it? Or will you reject him? Or will you ignore him? Or will you merely stand back and admire him? He didn't come here just to entertain your curiosity. He came to be your king. But what a king. He came to be a life-saving, evil-destroying, heart-captivating king over your life. And all these things that he has been explaining through these parables, that they can change your life completely, even down to the way you speak.

Not so that we become a sort of weird secret cultish club, but it just permeates every part of your being. These things will change your life for the better. Not to make your life easier.

We trust the king to make things much better later. But knowing this king is great treasure. These things can completely change your life. And so the message is, if you understand these things, and you understand that these things can change your life, very simply, let them. Let them change your life.

Let Jesus change your life. If this is something that is new to you, we'd be happy to talk to you about that. If maybe you've been listening to Jesus for a long time, and you just thought, oh, how interesting, how fascinating.

[14 : 50] But I think it's more like this. Jesus isn't giving you that option. Jesus is saying, no, you need to submit to him as king, on his terms, in his way.

So do that. And we'd love to talk to you about that. Do keep reading in Matthew's Gospel. If you don't have a Bible, do take this Matthew's Gospel.

It's our gift to you. Do take that and read it. Get to know Jesus better. Get to know this king better and submit to him. You will be very glad that you did.

Let's pray.