

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR AUGUST 15, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Matthew 13:1-17
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION

¹That same day Jesus left the house and went out beside Lake Galilee, where he sat down to teach ²Such large crowds gathered around him that he had to sit in a boat, while the people stood on the shore. ³Then he taught them many things by using **PARABLES**. He said:

A farmer went out to scatter seed in a field. ⁴While the farmer was scattering the seed, some of it fell along the road and was eaten by birds. ⁵Other seeds fell on thin, rocky ground and quickly started growing because the soil wasn't very deep. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched and dried up, because they did not have enough roots. ⁷Some other seeds fell where thornbushes grew up and choked the plants. ⁸But a few seeds did fall on good ground where the plants produced **a hundred or sixty or thirty times** as much as was scattered. ⁹If you have ears, pay attention!

¹⁰Jesus' disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you use nothing but **STORIES** when you speak to the people?"

¹¹Jesus answered:

I have explained the secrets about the **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** to you, but not to others. ¹²Everyone who has something will be given more. But people who don't have anything will lose even what little they have. ¹³I use **STORIES** when I speak to them because when they look, they cannot see, and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand. ¹⁴So God's promise came true, just as the prophet *Isaiah* had said,

"These people will listen and listen,

but never understand.

They will look and look,

but never see.

¹⁵All of them have

stubborn minds!

Their ears are stopped up,

and their eyes are covered.

They cannot see or hear

or understand.

If they could,

they would turn to me,

and I would heal them."

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Matthew tells the story of Jesus as a cosmic epic. It doesn't begin with Jesus. God has been at work for a long time. Salvation, the main business of Jesus, is the coming together in formal form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world. Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all parts of our lives – work, family, friends, memories, dreams – also completed (*or fulfilled*) in Jesus. (from *The Message*)

PARABLE:: A parable is, literally, something "cast alongside" something else (that's what *para-* means). Jesus' parables were teaching-aides: stories that were "cast alongside" a truth in order to illustrate that truth. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

a hundred or sixty or thirty times:: 100 bushels per acre is considered an excellent yield. Depending on other factors one might more realistically target or reach 90, 60, 40, 30 or other appropriate numbers of bushels per acre.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN:: In the original Greek *basilea* is the word for Kingdom. It can also be translated as reign, empire, kingship, rule, or sovereignty. It's both a geographic space and a temporal realm, and also indicates the activity of the king (ruler) himself, his exercise of sovereign power.. The other gospels most often use the expression "kingdom of God."

stubborn minds:: literally are "hard hearted". This is the expression used repeatedly in Exodus to describe how Pharaoh repeatedly opposed the will of God to free the Israelites.

¹⁶ But God has blessed you, because your eyes can see and your ears can hear! ¹⁷ Many prophets and righteous people were eager to see what you see and to hear what you hear.

Romans 8:18-31
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to *futility*, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

²⁸ We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, *who are called according to his purpose*. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

³¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Does Jesus not want the people to “get” his parable stories? Why are their minds stubborn, ears plugged, eyes shut and their hearts hardened?
- What is the truth of the parable of the sower and the seed, in which the seed is the message of the Kingdom?
- If God wants creation to be conformed and transformed into the image of his son the Christ, what would that look like? Who does God intend that for? Who then is predestined? And predestined to what?
- What connection do you hear between the message of the parable of the sower and the seed and this portion of Romans 8?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word about Kingdom purpose?

prophet Isaiah :: This is a citation of Isaiah 6:9-10. Verse 13 is one of Deuteronomy 29:6. The implication is that you cannot understand unless God gives you to understand.

Romans is the letter of pastoral advice written by the Apostle Paul to the church in ancient Rome. It's considered to be the best of his thinking, and the premier document of Christian theology. Paul takes the well-witnessed and devoutly believed facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and thinks through its implications.

Futility:: sometimes translated as vanity, emptiness, purposelessness, or moral depravity. It's a state of aimlessness due to lacking purpose or any meaningful end. (compare it to the purpose of v. 28).

who are called according to God's purpose:: Paul explains that the purpose of God is for humans to be conformed, transformed into the image of Jesus – his son.