

Matthew (Quality: Average)

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[0 : 00] I will conclude our meditation this afternoon upon the parable in the 13th of Matthew in the 47th and 48th verses.

The 13th of Matthew, the 47th and 48th verses. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels that cast the bad away.

It says that all that are gathered into the net of the gospel by the preaching of it are not necessarily good in the sense meant in this parable, that it gathers of every kind, both good and bad.

And here it comes to pass that any are gathered by the preaching of the gospel and yet are not renewed in a gracious way so as to be fit for heaven itself.

For there is this great distinction between the kingdom of heaven, as here intended, and the heavenly state itself, that in the kingdom of heaven there is a mixture, but in heaven itself there is one perfect, unmixed, and blessed unity.

[2 : 29] And so I said that preaching of truth, doctrinal truth, may attract many who are not renewed by regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

And although they so far believe the truth doctrinally, they're not sanctified by the truth spiritually. But then many are.

Because one feels necessary, faithfully, to accept these solemn considerations before the hearers, it doesn't follow that you're in that case by no manner of means.

And I'm very much disposed to feel after what I said this morning that though they are far less narrow as to number gathered by the preaching of the gospel into a profession of religion, the proportion of those who are savingly wrought upon is greater.

Because when it is a general custom, well, that gathers a good many who would never be gathered at all if it were not that it's a general custom and tradition.

[3 : 55] Still, I think it's pretty certain that that state will not come in the gospel dispensation in which all that are gathered by the preaching of the truth are sanctified by it in their hearts.

And at least, my friends, that should cause us much spiritual concern and much true prayer before God that the truth that we believe made by the Holy Spirit have a sanctifying effect upon our spirit and that it might be the Holy Spirit that indeed regenerate us by calling the word of truth to bring forth a new and spiritual life in our hearts.

Now, where that is so, well then, this power that will be Jesus Christ looks very favourable to such. I was going also this afternoon to speak in the same way with regard to the other features of a gospel ministry that I've mentioned.

I just hint at them. Now, take the point of warning. Now, as I've said, solemn, spiritual, faithful, affectionate warning is a very important part of a gospel ministry.

A minister doesn't let the net down properly if he doesn't warn any others. Flee from the wrath to come is a solemn word.

[5 : 42] Now, that may have different effects. The warning of the word may make some people so far alarmed that instead of being careless and unconcerned, they turn to religion.

If I might so say, they're almost frightened into it by the warning. as though to adopt some form or other and some practice or other of religion as going to put them right.

They don't see anything further than that they lived in a careless way with regard to religion. But now, my friends, that makes no one good if it gathers them into the net.

But if the effect of the warning is to call them to flee believingly and feelingly for faith and feeling go together in this, you know, to Jesus Christ for refuge, to his wonderful cross for safety, and to the covering of his atoning blood for deliverance, if it produces that faith in their hearts in Jesus Christ to flee to him and shelter feelingly beneath his redeeming blood and cross that made them good.

They're good. They're good by faith in Jesus Christ. But merely to be frightened by warning is not good enough.

[7 : 32] The Holy Spirit must produce repentance in the heart and faith towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. See?

So the warning bring in good and bad. And then if you take the invitations of the word, gospel invitations are a very important part of the gospel net.

And the invitations are open. invitation I know that some invitations in the gospel are directed to individual characters and that's especially to encourage them in the feeling that the invitation of the word does especially apply to them.

But you must remember that Jesus Christ has said, him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. And that lays down no conditions whatever.

As John Bunyan says in one of his apt expressions in that book of his come and welcome to Jesus Christ, he said, it's any him that comes, any him that comes.

[8 : 51] Well, now that's so far good. But even that may gather into the net of different characters. Now the son may feel, well, I respond to that, that's very simple, and that's very easy.

All one has to do is to just come to Jesus Christ. But, is it all that simple and easy? Now it is perfectly simple that all that come to Jesus Christ, he will not cast out.

There's nothing mysterious or complicated about that at all. But what do they come to Jesus Christ for? And does they come into Jesus Christ, bring them into any real desire and concern to sit at his dear feet and learn of him, and to drink into his rich, pure, sweet spirit?

it? If it goes no farther than to use a common evangelical word to decide for Christ, that's just simply not good enough.

What is necessary is not just to decide for Christ, but to be Christ like ourselves. to be Christ like ourselves.

[10 : 17] Now to sit at Jesus' feet and learn of him, and to learn of him who was meek, and humble and tender, and loving and forgiving, to come to Jesus Christ to learn of him, and to drink him from his spirit, to be like him, though never so far short of his perfection, but to have that likeness of him in our heart.

Now that makes a person to be good, because they are conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ. But just to say, well, I come to Jesus Christ, and simply ignore the solemn necessity of being conformed to the image of God's dear Son, just isn't good enough.

Well, now, there are other things I was going to say about that, but I must pass that over. I must come to the next consideration, and that is that how be it, there always has been, is now, and always will be, a mixture in the kingdom of heaven, as I've described it to you, there must a necessity come a time of separation.

I feel that the very truth, that the kingdom of heaven, both in this parable, and in the parable of the wheat and the tares, shows, that there is a mixture, in the very nature of it, implies there must be a separation.

See, my friends, nobody with sober, tall to tall, would feel that all this mixture is going to be swept into heaven en masse. No one could possibly think that.

[12 : 23] Could they? separation? If there's a mixture, there must be presently a separation. And, if the scripture lays down, as it does, so clearly and solemnly, such conditions as will never enter into heaven at all, and such as will enter into heaven, the one must be separated from the other.

So that first, a separation is essential. And further, the Lord Jesus puts it in his parable, that this separation will be at the end of the world.

So shall it be at the end of the world. By the end of the world, I feel, well this is my feel about this, that by the end of the world, I don't understand the end of the existence of the world, but as another translation puts it, so shall it be at the end of time.

That is, the time of the gospel dispensation. Or there's a limit to the duration of this present dispensation.

There's a limit to it. There's a time beyond which it will not go one hour. When that time comes, then these solemn things will come that are here foretold.

[14 : 05] And they will not come before. It is very much a feel upon the minds of those who lay things to heart that the condition of things in the nation and the nations indicate that the judgment of God may well come upon the earth because of the increasing provocations to his law.

And that is a very solemn and I feel a very sober feeling. But this is true. nothing will bring this dispensation to an end before the time has run out.

If you walk through the time, God is fulfilling the eternal purposes of his heart with regard to the ingathering and salvation of those that he has appointed unto salvation.

He is gathering out of every generation of people for himself. Solomon says in the book of Ecclesiastes, though he wouldn't have had this in mind, he said, to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens.

And it's not improper for me to say, even much that applies even to the purposes of God. There's a time for his purposes under heaven and to everything there is a season.

[15 : 41] There's a season for preaching, calling, quickly, ingathering. There's a season. And when that season has ended and the purpose of God in time has been fulfilled, then the end of the world, as it is meant here, the end of the world.

And, of course, the end of the world means the end of all that pertains to the present administration of the gospel dispensation, an end of preaching, as it is now anyway, an end to that.

And, I wish that people who have so little patience with preaching would consider that the time is rapidly approaching when they will hear no more preaching forever.

Never hear the gospel again, the despised gospel again. Never. Never. Because the end has come. And the end of the world is the end of the preaching of the gospel.

gospel. And so regard, as I have said, to the purposes of God in all this. Now, nothing can cause the purpose of God to fail of accomplishment.

[17 : 01] That is one of the most certain, fable, and to my mind, one of the most comforting considerations. That nothing can prevent the purposes of God being fulfilled.

if it depended upon man's will, or mind, or cooperation, or what not, then the purposes of God might very well never be fulfilled at all.

And then you would get a frustrated God. But when you consider that the purposes of God must necessarily be fulfilled, well, that's a very comforting consideration.

Nothing can alter that. So then, to be short on this, the end of the world will mean the fulfilling of God's purpose in the ingathering of his elect, and of all those means appointed, preaching of the gospel, and all other means to that end.

Then cometh the end. God's kingdom is complete. Because then, the kingdom of heaven will have reached its fullness.

[18 : 21] And according to that word in the 15th chapter to the Corinthians, I think it applies to this, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

See, then cometh the end. God's kingdom is complete. Every ransomed soul is gathered in, the purposes of God from eternity have been wrought out in time and consummated in eternity.

I must come now to the next consideration. And that is, when this time of separation comes, the purposes of God being accomplished, the gospel dispensation having ended, then, who will do the separating?

The angels. The angels. So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.

angels. There is something about the angels, their existence, their nature, and their continual serving of God, that is mysterious to us, that it is very clearly set forth in the scriptures that there are such beings as angels, and a very great number of them, and being spirits, they're not visible.

[20 : 11] Occasionally, but very occasionally, the angels have become visible to men. For instance, at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, and so on.

But that was an exception. It is not natural for angels to be visible to us. But we can learn much about them from the scriptures, and we know that there are good, pure, blessed angels, and fallen angels, who are impure, and a continual cause of trouble and evil.

things. And by the way, formerly people used to scorn the idea of there being spirits at all. We're seeing every day about these evil spirits in people, and these strange ways in which they're supposed to be exorcised and cast out.

Now, I think it's all very sinister indeed. I'm by no means to put all this down, as having nothing in it. I believe there are evil spirits, and I believe they do gain possession of people, and cause them to do all manner of dreadful things.

I believe evil spirits are too strong for anyone to control if they get possession of them. But as for this casting of them out, I don't know what to say about that.

[21 : 48] I know the Lord Jesus Christ did, but then you see he had all power over all spirits. But we'll turn from that, unsaved with consideration, there are unquestionably good and pure and blessed angels.

And we know this, that they do always the will of God. They're engaged in constant, unceasing obedience to God's will.

They render angelic obedience to God. God's they go to and fro at his command, exercising a power that we may be the subjects of, and yet not be conscious that it's the power of angelic spirit.

But now leaving the question of the angels as such, let us apply it to this solemn consideration. At the end of the world, angels shall come forth and do the separating of the wicked from the just.

Well, this is very instructive and suggestive. Because God has not left it now, and he will not leave it then.

[23 : 07] For any man to do this work, whatever discernment men may have of the state and character of others, it's forbidden to them to pass, as it were, a final judgment on anyone.

It is not committed to man to decide who is good and who is bad. Not when it comes to a final separation, I mean. We know, of course, that where the grace of God is evident, and we can see it and respond to it, we know where we are with such.

But if it comes to a separation, it's not permitted to us. And as for the ministers who do the casting of the net into the scene, when their work is done, they must take their place with the others, good or bad.

It would seem that there are good scripture reasons why this should be committed into the hands of the angels. Because for one thing, the angels have great power.

We are instructed in the scripture concerning them that the angels excel in strength during his commandment, happening unto the voice of his word, which is just what I've been saying.

[24 : 34] They excel in strength. That is, they excel all our strength. There's no one has the strength of an angel. They excel all human strength.

And, as I said just now, that is applicable to evil and good angels. Good angels excel in strength. So that, my friends, there's no question, there will be no question of the bad resisting the angels.

They know we're not going to be cast away. No, my friends, the angels excel in strength. They excel in strength. There's no resisting them when God gives them commandment in this matter.

And, another thing about the angels, they're without prejudice. Now, human judgment, especially in regard of such solemn things as these, human judgment in anyone is far too liable to be affected by prejudice.

prejudice. And prejudice invariably affects anyone's judgment. As a mind being constituted as it is, the mind is incapable of forming an impartial judgment where prejudice enters into it.

[26 : 10] We all know that, but some others have known it pretty painfully too. Now then, the angels have no prejudice. not in favor of the bad, not against the good.

The angels have no prejudice. And, what is more, the angels have remarkable knowledge and understanding.

But, I won't elaborate this because of the time. The Lord Jesus Christ in other parables has taught the very same thing.

The labor in the gospel ministry belongs not to angels, but to the Lord's saint servant. When, for instance, Cornelius was waiting upon the Lord, God sent an angel to call Peter to preach the gospel to him.

The angel didn't do it. Peter did. Poor sinful men who know the truth and have experienced the power and have understanding of the doctrine are the ones to preach the gospel.

[27 : 26] No one can preach the gospel to sinners like ransomed. Save sinners can. God sends saved sinners to save sinners.

sinners. But when it comes to the judgment, that's different. Now the angels come into it now. The work passes from the laborers to the angels, from those that cast the net into the sea, to the angels to separate the good from the bad.

the people are still alive. Another consideration that comes into this is that the separation is final. Now no separation is final while people are still alive.

You add a congregation of a considerable number, there would probably be a mixture in that congregation. But it doesn't follow that that is a final condition.

For the grace of God, even to the very last of men's lives, can come sovereignly and powerfully to snatch them from the brink of hell itself.

[28 : 41] The separation is not final. It's there. There are sheep and goats, there are wheat and tares, there are good and bad. The separation is there but it's not the final.

At the end of the world, the separation is final. In conclusion this afternoon, I want to point out again in a little different way the significance of these expressions good and bad.

When it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels that cast the bad away. bad. Now, to understand this I think correctly, you must understand that good and bad refers to the Mosaic laws with regard to what was fit to eat and what was not fit to eat.

As you know, the Mosaic laws were very particular about what was sanctioned to be used for food and what was not. bad. And that applied, of course, to animals.

And what is multiplied, as you might see if you tugged it up, I think, to fishes as well. There were some fish that were good for food. There were some fish that were not good for food.

[30 : 08] It doesn't exactly follow that the fish that were not good for food were corrupt in themselves so much, but they were not fit for food.

food. And in that sense, they were bad from the fishermen's point of view. They got no value. They couldn't be sold. Nobody would buy them because nobody could eat them, so cast them away.

They're no good. Now, finally, may not this be solemnly applied to this consideration that bad means not fit for heaven.

good means fit for heaven. That's the difference. Fit or not fit for heaven. Like the fish were fit or not fit for food.

When we speak of fitness for heaven, no one will think at least, no one listening to me, that I would suggest there's any fitness in the knowledge of ferals for the heavenly state.

[31 : 18] fitness for heaven is the effect of the grace of God, the cleansing blood of Jesus, the renewing of the Holy Spirit within, that creates a fitness for heaven.

heaven. When you consider that there must be a fitness for the company of heaven, where there's no union, where there's no agreement, there's no fitness, in the sense of company and communion, heaven, heaven, the whole company of heaven, are undefiled because they're cleansed, and they're sanctified by grace.

No one, my friends, can work themselves up to a fitness for heaven. Not least, you're trying to, it's far too high an ideal, but the Holy Spirit can work it in us by his grace.

Heaven is not only pure in the sense of company, but think of heaven or so with regard to the service, the worship of heaven.

Never worship of heaven is a continual worship of love and praise and thanksgiving. And who can be fit for that unless they are brought to know and feel how much they have to be thankful to God for us, for his grace, to Jesus Christ for his precious blood.

[33 : 04] Here it is, unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. See, that's it for heaven, the love of the Lord, and a cleanse by his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God.

That is, in other words, to serve and to glorify him. that all those who are fit for heaven are gathered into heaven. And those who are not fit for heaven are cast away.

That's the point of the parable. Here, my friends, it is not matter for us to think over and pray on. God, and by the grace of God, I feel that notwithstanding all that we feel of ourselves there, and fitness and unworthiness, that the Lord will fit us for heaven.

He will fit us for heaven. You say, why? Why, because we're always praying that he will. We're always praying that he will.

And God, we've been taught to know this beyond any question, that there is that in his most precious blood that can make us whiter than snow.

[34 : 28] And the soul that's cleansed in the blood of Christ, so white, is fit for heaven. You see? Fit for heaven. He gathered the good into vessels because they were fit for heaven.

may I leave at something. May the Lord bless his words today. I sometimes get very heavy-hearted.

I feel sometimes I preach the best of my ability, truthful and solemn and weighty matters. And the Lord knows I put my very heart and soul into it.

sometimes I feel, well, what is it a shell point? What is it a shell point? But still, the Lord knows that, doesn't he?

And here again I fall back on to this, that if any spiritual good that will be found at last to be fit for heaven, has been wrought through my poor, helpless instrumentality, it's been worth it all.

[35 : 46] Amen. Amen.