

The Sower and the Double-Edged Sword

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[0 : 0 0] But we're going to turn to our reading this morning and we're continuing our series in Matthew's Gospel. So please do turn to Matthew chapter 13 and we'll be reading verses 1 to 23.

So Matthew chapter 13 and I'll read from verse 1. That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

And great crowds gathered about him so that he got onto a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables saying, A sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path. And the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where they did not have much soil.

And immediately they sprang up since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away.

[1 : 1 0] Other seeds fell among thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain.

Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear. Then the disciples came and said to him, Why do you speak to them in parables?

And he answered them, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. But to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given.

And he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables.

Because seeing they do not hear. And hearing they do not hear. Nor do they understand. Indeed in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, You will indeed hear, but never understand.

[2 : 1 8] And you will indeed see, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull. And with their ears they can barely hear.

And their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand their heart. And turn and I'll heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see.

And your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see. And did not see it. And to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Hear then, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes. And snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

[3 : 2 5] Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while. And when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

Amen. May the Lord bless his word to us this morning. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to the passage we read there in Matthew's Gospel and chapter 13.

Now, surely one of the great perplexities and sources of pain for us as Christians is when we see people persistently rejecting Christ and his gospel.

[4 : 45] And we say, why? When we can see such clear evidence that he is, who he says he is, and that he offers such a great salvation. Perhaps even a greater discouragement is when we see some who seem to have been keen disciples of Christ and eventually fall away from him and even become hostile to Christ and to his church.

Why? I think that is probably one of the greatest griefs for any pastor. But these agonies that we experience today are not new.

Jesus' first disciples had seen, they'd believed, they'd followed him with great joy, despite having many things that they didn't yet quite understand fully. Yet they had also seen many reject Jesus with vitriol, even with violence.

We saw a lot of time in chapter 12, his own townspeople refused him and said he had a demon. The religious establishment disowned him. They said he was in league with the devil. They even conspired to kill him.

Why? Why? If God's kingdom is here, where is this worldwide glory and triumph? Where is the judgment on all evil?

[6 : 05] Where is the end of all suffering? It seems so invisible, doesn't it, to our eyes today? Well, here in Matthew chapter 13, we have the third great discourse of Matthew's gospel.

And Jesus directly answers these questions. And he explains to his disciples then, and to disciples today, he explains vital truths that we must understand if we are going to understand his kingdom, and our part in that kingdom here on earth.

And if we are not to be discouraged, because we may not see all the things that we think we ought to be seeing. And Jesus' answer to these questions is that there are things that are going to remain invisible in this world.

But they are visible to eyes that have been opened by God through the gospel. And we must see them, and we must understand the truth. Or we'll never really be able to serve Christ and his kingdom as we ought.

And to open our eyes, he gives, in these chapters, seven parables. The parable of the sower, and then three pairs of parables in the rest of the chapter. And they're all speaking of things which are presently hidden, although nevertheless real, about the kingdom of God.

[7 : 29] Things that will one day be visible to all, to the whole of creation. One pair, that's the wheat and the weeds and the dragnet, they speak about real division.

The division of God's kingdom from this world, which is real, but is presently hidden. One pair, that's the mustard seed and the yeast, they deal with the real growth of the kingdom of God, which again is growing everywhere, and yet presently, it seems to be hidden to most.

And then the final pair, the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price, they speak of the real value of the kingdom, which is already utterly real and lasting, but it's still hidden to so many people's eyes.

Now we're going to spend a few weeks here on chapter 13 to ensure that we really get clear on its teaching, because it is absolutely vital. And it is something also that is very often misunderstood in today's church.

One of the chief causes of disillusion, indeed of disaster, in Christian faith today, is failure to understand what Jesus teaches here about what we are to expect now while his kingdom is growing on the earth, and what is not yet to be until at last he comes again in power and glory.

[8 : 53] And if we're mixed up about these crucial realities so that we expect now the things that Jesus has only promised for that last day when he returns, then friends, we will be led into all kinds of very bitter disappointment.

And very often, that is what leads people to abandon their faith. So this is really vital teaching for all of us.

And in our passage today, in verses 1 to 23 here, Jesus gives a very clear answer to this vexed question as to why the response to his wonderful gospel is so mixed.

And to the nagging question, which, remember, was John the Baptist's question, about where is God's judgment on all wickedness and on all evil? If his heavenly kingdom really is at hand, when the Messiah is going to judge the world in righteousness and divide the righteous from the wicked, well, if that's so, then where is the great public vindication of his people?

And where is the condemnation of his enemies? Well, Jesus' answer is that although it's not yet visible, as it will be at the last day, that judgment has in fact begun.

[10 : 19] And it's precisely because it has begun that we see the varied response to the gospel of Jesus, that we do see the very thing that so perplexes us.

Because the gospel itself is God's instrument of judgment. The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, is how Hebrews puts it.

And its very proclamation is already piercing to the division of soul and spirit, is already judging the thoughts and the intentions of people's hearts.

So we need to begin at the center of this passage. Look at verses 10 to 17. Because here Jesus begins to give words of clear explanation about this point.

We don't begin there. We're going to miss the significance of the message, both to his true followers, but also his message to the crowds, the apparent followers whom he is challenging to really be his true disciples.

[11 : 25] So before we look at the parables, the sowing, which teach us about that sowing of God's judgment, we need to get these verses very clear that are telling us about the sword of God's judgment.

judgment. The gospel word itself is God's dividing instrument, his sword of judgment. In the proclamation of the gospel and in the responses that it elicits, God's verdict on men and women is being forged as they are divided in their response to Jesus and his claim on their lives.

And that's what the parable of the sower is about. Verse 19 makes it clear. The word of the kingdom is at work. And the nature of that work is described here in verses 10 to 17 and it's very stark.

God's word divides. Always. Because it's never just a matter of information. It is a word of power. It's a living and active double-edged sword.

And in it, God confronts not just our minds but our hearts. In it, he calls us to obey him or to reject him.

[12 : 45] And God's word, you see, is personal. It's calling us into a relationship with him. It's creating a relationship with him. He calls you and he calls me to trust and obey and to follow him.

And either you respond and that relationship begins and it grows and it flourishes or else you reject and there can be no relationship or any that there was becomes cold and it withers and it dies.

God's word always elicits response. Neutrality is utterly impossible. Remember chapter 12 verse 30. Whoever is not with me is against me.

only these two ways are possible. It is utterly binary. That word that is so despised by our increasingly woke society.

God's word divides. Well, how can a mere spoken word be so powerfully divisive? Well, consider this word.

[13 : 48] Will you marry me? That's a divisive word, isn't it? Either it creates or it destroys a relationship. If that word is met with a yes, well, then it opens up a whole new world of opportunity.

Every subsequent word develops it and enriches it. But if that word will you marry me is met with a no, well, it closes the door.

Any subsequent words are just going to distance and destroy more and more that relationship that once was. And so it is, you see, with the word of God in the gospel and in the response that people make.

It creates division. And depending on the response, God's subsequent words will either draw you nearer and nearer to Christ or they will push you further and further away from him.

And ultimately that separation will be absolutely infinite. That is the verdict that will be made clear to all creation on the last day.

[14 : 58] But you see, friends, the critical message for us is that the judgment of that day is being forged now, today, in response to the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That ultimate division has already begun. And Matthew highlights that even in the very structure of his chapter. Look at verses 2 and 3.

Jesus is speaking the parable of the sword to the crowds as he does for the subsequent three parables, verse 34. All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables.

But notice verse 10 here. He gives his disciples plain words of explanation. And again in verse 36, you see, he leaves the crowds and again he explains it all clearly and plainly to his disciples alone.

See, there's a developing division already that is unmistakable. It's no accident that the final parables, if you look at verse 47 following, about the fishnet, it is all about unambiguous separation.

[16 : 09] God's acceptance or his rejection of individual human beings in the end. But the parables begin, don't they, with the sword, with man's acceptance or rejection of God's word, of the word of the kingdom.

And see, Jesus' point is so very clear. The verdict of the last day is being forged now by your acceptance or rejection of the gospel.

God's revelation always judges. It's a personal word that divides between those who will hear and respond with their hearts to Jesus, who he'll draw on and he'll enlighten and he'll give more.

It divides these from those who refuse and from whom Jesus will withdraw himself and withhold further light from. That's what's going on here.

That's Jesus' explanation of why he speaks to the crowds, verse 13, only in parables. It's not because, as people so often like to think and say, it's not because parables are lovely illustrations of the message that make Jesus' teaching much easier to grasp.

- [17 : 26] It's the opposite of that, says Jesus. Verse 13, this is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Jesus speaks in parables precisely because people will not see, and will not hear, and will not understand his message. So he says, now I will conceal it from them further, so that they cannot see.

See, for those who do respond to Jesus, who want to hear his word, as the disciples do, verse 12 here is true, to the one who has, more will be given. But for those who are scorning, who are rejecting, who are devaluing the word of the gospel, well the second half of verse 12, even what he has will be taken away.

It's very stark, the word of the gospel divides and it goes on dividing. It is a double-edged sword of God's judgment. Now notice, notice also the element of divine mystery here.

Verse 11 is clear. Those who can see the truth can do so only, only because God has opened their eyes to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.

- [18 : 53] God is sovereign, utterly, in revealing himself to human beings and yet, he also says here that his judgment is utterly just. human beings are responsible for their rejection of him.

They have absolutely no excuse. Remember in chapter 11, Jesus said that Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented if they'd seen what these Galileans had seen, but they refused Jesus despite every opportunity.

God's revelation calls everyone to Jesus by his command. Come to me, says Jesus and I will give you rest. And so refusal of that divine command is inexcusable.

You cannot receive the forgiveness of God if you refuse the forgiveness of God. It's an impossibility. And yet, despite all this personal divine revelation, men and women continue to suppress the truth.

That's how the apostle Paul puts it in Romans chapter 1. We censor the truth. We de-platform the truth. We blank it out. We refuse to believe what is clear and obvious.

- [20 : 11] Hearing, we do not hear, nor do we understand. But that's how it's always been. Jesus quotes here from the prophet Isaiah eight centuries before in verse 14.

he spoke about God to people who will see and hear but never perceive, never understand. Because, well, here's the point.

They don't want to perceive and they will not understand. That's why their minds are closed. That's why their eyes and ears are closed to the truth of God.

Because understanding, you see, remember, end of verse 15 there, understanding is a matter of the heart. It's not a matter of the intellect.

It's not, oh, I can't understand the gospel. It's a matter of the heart. And in the Bible, that is the very center, the authority center of our being. Our heart says, I will not obey, I will not submit to his lordship.

- [21 : 17] And Jesus says, my people have always been like that. Hard of heart. resistant to my grace, just as Isaiah saw. And the psalmist, he quotes later on in verse 35 from Psalm 78, that similarly speaks of a generation of God's people who refused to walk according to his commands, didn't believe God, didn't trust his saving power.

You can read the psalm. God says, he rained down blessing on their heads, and yet in spite of all this, they still sinned. Despite his wonders, they did not believe.

Until at last God rejected the whole generation and sent them into exile. And how chilling it is to hear the Son of God himself saying here, so be it, you will not hear, you refuse to obey, and so now your hearts will be hardened only further by everything that you hear.

You will indeed hear, verse 14, but you will never understand. You will indeed see, but you will never perceive. Rather than my gracious words of love drawing you on, they will drive you further and further away, just like these unbelievers of old.

God will be given. Whereas you see verse 16, for true disciples who hear and respond, well, just like the believing prophets of old who longed for more knowledge of the Messiah to come, but just had to be content with what they had in their time, well, they will have the privilege of receiving so much more.

[23 : 07] For to the one who has, more will be given. the gospel word is the sword of God's judgment, a sword of division.

If you welcome it, he will fill you with more and more and more light and life. But if you reject it, Jesus says you'll be emptied of even that light that you've had, even what he has will be taken away.

Let's look down to the end of the chapter and you'll see how clearly that parting of the ways has become already in that generation. You see verse 51, the disciples' belief is clear. They do understand with their hearts and so, verse 52, Jesus says they will have the joy of teaching others the treasures of the kingdom, the wonders of treasures old, God's story of grace right from the ancient days and now it's coming climax, it's glorious climax in the coming of Jesus.

as recipients of everything that was promised to the fathers, they will proclaim the treasure of what is new as well as what is old. But his own countrymen, verse 54, the crowds that he taught, they refused him.

He's just a carpenter's boy, they said. Verse 57, they took offense at him. And so, look at verse 58 there.

[24 : 46] He did not do many mighty works there because, because of their unbelief. Friends, that is such a stark warning.

The parables of Jesus are not homely illustrations of his message. They are his message. They are his gospel word. And it is a double-edged sword, a sword of division which divides men and ultimately divides them forever.

It hardens hearts that are hardened and are hardening against him, just as it enlightens hearts that are softening and being drawn to him.

And our response is never neutral. It always has consequences. And the situation for each of us is never static.

Every single time that we hear the message of Jesus, either more light is dawning in our hearts or the darkness is closing in.

[26 : 00] And if that happens, then we are making it harder and harder to see, harder and harder to hear ever again. We mustn't ever presume on the grace of God.

Because there can come a day when you have made yourself so deaf that you will no longer hear anything, even if God himself is shouting at you. Now the only way to find more light is to grasp with both hands, to follow all the light that you have.

And if you do, Jesus promises more light will be given to you. The gospel is the sword of God's judgment.

That's Jesus' first answer to the disciples' question about why he spoke only in parables to the crowds. But he doesn't stop there because his followers need to know that if this is so, and if the gospel is always drawing people further on in knowing Jesus and hardening others and driving them away from Jesus, then his followers need to know, and we need to know, that in our witnessing to the gospel, we are involved in the sowing of God's judgment.

What verses 1 to 9's parable and the explanation here in verses 18 to 23, what they're teaching us is that whenever the gospel is at work, we shall see the word of God working that judgment in dividing people by their response to the message and to its demands.

[27 : 42] And when we do see that happening, friends, we're not to despair, we're not to lose heart, we're not to think that God is somehow out of control, but rather we're to be assured of the fact that as Isaiah chapter 55 verse 11 says, God's word never returns to him empty.

It shall accomplish always the very purpose for which he sends it forth. And that purpose is both his salvation and his judgment.

Notice that Jesus explains the parable exclusively to his disciples. He's speaking primarily to them here. Although he is also, of course, challenging the crowds.

He's challenging them to hear and to think and to seek understanding. He says that in verse 9, he who has ears, let him hear. Ask, what kind of soil am I in this parable?

But remember, he's answering the disciples' questions about why do you speak in parables? And he's explaining the things that they're so perplexed about, the mixed response to the message of his kingdom.

[29 : 01] You ought to have been welcomed by all, but isn't. And he's helping them to understand the hostility of so many to his message.

Because they need to have their faith in Jesus' gospel message assured. And they need to realize that in their own witness to that gospel, they also will meet exactly the same response of division.

But, said Jesus, when you do see all this, what you are seeing is the word of the gospel doing the work that God himself has purpose for it.

It is accomplishing the very thing for which he sent it forth. It is sifting men and women. It's trying their hearts. It's penetrating to the very depths of their being to expose the truth.

As they're faced with the real message of Christ and his kingship. And so, he's warning his disciples to be real and to be realists.

[30 : 11] He's warning us that we shall see the gospel of Christ rejected and we're to expect that in all gospel work that is genuine gospel work. And that must never make us lose trust in Christ and his gospel.

It must never make us think that somehow our message doesn't have any power and we need to change it. The fault is not in the word. It's not in the seed that is sown.

Rather, it's in the hearts which are exposed by that rejection of the word. And notice one very important thing that we're to understand is that there are many different ways of rejecting the gospel of Christ.

Not just one. And sadly Jesus is telling us that we will see and experience all of these if we are going to be true and faithful servants of the kingdom.

Now we all know this parable so well and it's a brilliant story. It's just as clear isn't it to 21st century townspeople as it was to 1st century rustic people. The sower scatters his precious seed all over his land perhaps to ensure that absolutely no good soil is missed.

[31 : 28] And yet inevitably the seed ends up in different places. On the path on the thin soil of the rocky limestone among the thorns and the thistles as well as on the good fertile growing soil.

Now for that reason people sometimes call this parable the parable of the soils because Jesus speaks about these different soils in the interpretation. But actually Jesus verse 18 calls it the parable of the sower.

And in the context his emphasis is on the sower and the seed and the risks of sowing and the heartbreaks and the loss that is involved in being a sower.

And yet above all of course on the great great assurance that there is a vast and abundant harvest to come. And therefore the emphasis is on the undaunted sowing of the seed despite all apparent unresponsiveness and unfruitfulness among many.

And his chief point is surely clear isn't it? God knows what he is doing and he is doing it. His salvation and his judgments are at work in this world under his sovereign sway.

[32 : 47] And this is what we are involved in when we're involved in gospel witness. So don't be despondent. Keep sowing the word. Keep at it and leave the rest to God.

But as you do you have to expect to see all of these reactions in the time before the final harvest including rejection in all of its different forms.

And the first of those he describes in verse 19 it's the response I'm calling it of stony flint the seed on the path. The response of those whose hearts are as hard as a stone pavement.

The gospel just seems to bounce right off them. Maybe they've been trampled hard by life's knocks. Maybe they've been hardened by years and years of battering in their experience.

That happens. Or maybe it's just a sudden event that's made them put up an armor-plated defense against God. They've lost a loved one or they've suffered a grave injustice.

[33 : 54] Whatever it might be. But they hear the message says Jesus and they do not understand it because their heart is as flint against it. There is no penetration into the organ of understanding of God's truth which is the heart.

Remember verse 15. Their heart and their will is closed to the truth so it simply bounces off. And they may think well I'm a rational person.

I'm a secular thinker. I'm an atheist. I'm totally in control of my own decisions. That's why I'm rejecting this message. But according to Jesus verse 19 you see the chilling reality is very different.

They're actually under the control of Satan himself. Because ultimately you see it is the devil and his kingdom that the gospel assaults.

And that is what explains the battles that we so often face in gospel work. And Jesus tells us we will see that reaction when the true gospel is proclaimed.

[35 : 04] The gospel is veiled to those who are perishing says Paul. And sometimes our enemy the devil is very clearly at work.

The second response, verse 20, is a heart full of superficial froth. That's the rocky ground. And that's a reaction that's so very disappointing in gospel work.

Here the shallow soil is warmed early by the sun. Life springs up quickly only to wither and die when the real heat of the sun takes its toll on its inadequate rooting.

And Jesus points very clear, isn't it, in verse 21. Just as the sun does always come up fully, so always does tribulation and persecution on account of the word.

And we see it, and it's so discouraging, don't we? After a mission, after a life course perhaps, whatever it is, there are those who are bubbling with joy, there's apparently zealous belief, but there's no root because nothing has gone deep into their heart.

[36 : 19] And they may suddenly have all sorts of paraphernalia of Christian faith. They might know 10,000 songs, they might love to worship, they might have all kinds of Christian things that they're involved with, but the real gospel and the real gospel's implications hasn't gone deep into their heart to change their loyalty to this world and change it to a loyalty to the kingdom of heaven.

So along comes illness or bereavement or unanswered prayers or ridicule and hostility on account of the gospel, on account of Christ's commands for our lives, which our society so increasingly rejects, which perhaps our friends and our families scorn.

And verse 21, you see this sudden collapse, immediately he falls away. Not a gradual cooling off, but collapse swiftly under pressure when these realities bite.

And yes, says Jesus, you're going to see that in gospel work. Froth had delighted us, suddenly going flat and utterly discouraging us. hearts.

But it's not just hearts of flint and froth that we'll meet, but also, thirdly, hearts betrayed by the seductive fretfulness of this world.

[37 : 51] That's the thorns in verse 22, you see. Not this time collapse under pressure, but a slow choking by the things of this world. Either it's care and worries for things perhaps that we don't have, or it's delights and things that we do have and that so easily seduce us away from Christ.

And how often we see that too, and I've seen it over the years. Church members drawn away from Christ by all of these things. Maybe worry or an obsession or care for their family's welfare, their education, their advancement, all of these things that come before the eternal things of God.

Or worry and obsession about professional advancement, business success, whatever it is that takes them away increasingly from their involvement in the church.

Often it's students and postgrads who are so taken up with academic success that that's what takes precedence over coming to church on a Sunday, coming to release the word during the week, coming to the growth group.

Or it's just the indulgences of wealth that so easily and often deceive us. And weekends you see become so important don't they? To indulge that new bicycle or that motorbike or those new golf clubs or the surfboard or the holiday home or whatever it is.

[39 : 18] And there's a slow and just gradual choking. And they don't realize until it's too late that something else is in possession of their heart.

And it's choking out all the spiritual life. I remember once long ago when I worked as a heart doctor. I remember once seeing a patient. When I did an ultrasound scan of his heart there was a huge tumor.

And it was so large it was literally choking him almost to death. It was an atrial myxoma by the way for you medical students who are interested. But it had grown so slowly and his heart and his whole circulatory system had adapted so much to it.

There was only when it was absolutely huge and life threatening that he began to notice the symptoms and became suddenly breathless as he was conking out all over the place. Well says Jesus could something so covert and deceitful be growing like that in your heart.

Taking it over. Putting you in real danger of being choked utterly in your spiritual life. It happens.

[40 : 37] And Jesus says it happens even after many many years. And in many ways those are the greatest and most painful blows in life and ministry aren't there when we see that.

But all of these you see whether it's hearts of stony flint or full of just spiritual froth. Or it's those that have fallen to subductive worldly fretting.

All of these all of them are in fact rejecters of Jesus Christ. None of them are truly fruitful. Even verse 22 those that take such a long time to prove unfruitful.

And fruitfulness according to Jesus is the only thing that counts as real faith. Remember chapter 12 verse 33 the tree is known by its fruit.

Not just hearing. Not just hearing and rejoicing. Not even in hearing and doing and serving for a time for a long long time. That's why obsessive countings of professions and decisions for Christ is almost a meaningless thing isn't it?

[41 : 53] Jesus says it's the one who endures to the end who will be saved. But yes you're going to witness all of these things very painfully says Jesus.

Hearts of flint. Hearts full of froth. Hearts that are captured by all kinds of worldly fretting. There are many many ways of rejecting the gospel of Christ.

Not just one. But there's only one way of truly accepting the gospel of life. Not many. And that's verse 23.

The way of solid fruit. Hearing the word. Understanding it. So that it does penetrate deep into the heart.

Taking over totally. So as to make that heart wholly fruitful for the kingdom of God. the word is allowed in.

[42 : 51] It's not rebuffed. It takes root so it's not burnt off. And it takes over so that it can never be stifled or choked.

But instead it bears fruit in abundance. And yes says Jesus you will see that also. You'll see it in abundance. You'll see an astonishing yield.

30, 60, even a hundredfold unheard of yields in farming. It may not seem dramatic. It may take time.

It may not even be seen ever by the sower. Only by the others who come after. By the harvesters. But it will surely be. It will be a great, great harvest.

Wherever God's true word is at work. There will be real fruit. Fruit that will last. And that's a promise.

[43 : 50] That's a certainty. That's a guarantee from Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So in closing, friends, let's be clear about two things that Jesus is saying to us so very clearly here, to his disciples and to the world.

First, to his disciples, then and now. Jesus is saying this, yes, you'll have many questions. Yes, there'll be some things that are hard for you to grasp now, but know this, God knows what he's doing and he's doing it in his gospel work.

The gospel is not a failure, not ever. Many will scoff, many will reject it, but the gospel itself is the beginning of God's final judgment.

One day, Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew 19, they are going to join him in judging the whole earth, but already, he says, all who proclaim the gospel are part of that.

And that's why we see what we do see. That's why we see responses to the gospel that are so divisive, because we are sowing with the double-edged sword of God's judgment.

[45 : 03] And so Jesus tells us, plead with men and women. Call them to submit to Christ. But realize you will see many turning away.

Be realistic. But have courage, have hope, because there is, look, there is good soil. There's nothing wrong with a message.

There's nothing wrong with a seed. There is no need to change the gospel. Jesus didn't trade in his divisive gospel for a new kind of seed. He didn't go for some kind of new hybrid that won't cause any offense.

No, no, no, no. Keep preaching the unchanging gospel of the kingdom. Keep sowing. And the harvest will come.

Vast. Beyond every expectation. salvation. Although it will only be that day of final harvest ultimately that will reveal the full extent of it.

[46 : 05] We may never see it in this life. But followers of Jesus, he is saying, know your calling. Scatter the seed far and wide, as far as you can, because God has promised to prepare the soil, and God has promised to bring forth fruit.

But second, Jesus also appeals to the world. He appeals to everyone in the crowd. Verse 9, whoever has ears, let him hear.

Listen. Think about his message. Take his gospel seriously. God's word is powerful. Do not resist it when you hear it.

It has power. It will judge your heart. In fact, it's doing that today. It's doing it every time you hear it. Open your heart to Jesus and his word.

It is his word also to all the world. It's his word to you this very Sunday morning. Don't harden your heart like Flint and ignore him.

[47 : 17] Don't let frivolity keep its real challenge out of your life. Don't let any material fretting seduce your way.

Crowd your heart so there's no room for the real Jesus Christ. What are you doing with the gospel of Jesus Christ today?

If your heart is open to him, he will fill it more and more and more, heaping new treasures upon old. that if you begin to close it, he will sadly more and more veil his word to you until at last no light can remain at all.

4 verse 12. to the one who has, more will be given and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even that which he has will be taken away.

Don't play games with the word of the gospel of the kingdom. It is a double-edged sword. So says Jesus, he who has ears, let him hear.

[48 : 52] Amen. Let's pray. Blessed Lord, who has caused all scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

that by patience and the comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou has given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.