>>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 32 <<<<<<<

1) To deal with the verses 13:1-23, we need to address the three individual sections separately.
2) We will read the parable first, then deal with the middle section, and finally deal with the explanation of parable itself.
3) So, let's read the parable first.

Matthew 13:1–23 (ESV)

The Parable of the Sower

[1] That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. [2] And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. [3] And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. [4] And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. [5] 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, [6] but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. [7] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. [8] Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. [9] He who has ears, let him hear."

4) Truthfully, we do not know all the parables Jesus may have used on this occasion.
5) However, we can assume that this particular parable caused the disciples to ask a question about why parables.
6) We will come back to the parable in a moment but first, let's continue with verses 10 through 17.
7) There are two questions we might think about:
   a) ***If you had never heard the explanation of this parable, would you automatically know what it meant? NO!***
   b) ***If you were in the audience, would you be curious enough to ask what it meant or would you just let it alone? Depends on why you are there!***
8) As we read this entire section of scripture, the sequence of passages seems awkward.
   a) Jesus is speaking to the crowds, the disciples interrupt, then there is uncertainty as to whether Jesus returns to speaking to the crowds or remains speaking to the disciples.
9) In truth, the disciples' "interruption" may not be an interruption at all.
   a) What feels odd assumes:
      i) parable → immediate interruption → explanation → return to crowd
   b) But Matthew does not require that sequence to be in real time.
   c) More likely:
      i) Jesus delivers a block of parables to the crowd.
      ii) At some point, the disciples ask their question.
      iii) Matthew places the question thematically right after the Sower because it explains how parables function.

10) Simply put, 13:10–17 is not necessarily a staged interruption; it's a literary hinge.

11) So, let's read 10-17 – the question and the answer …

The Purpose of the Parables

[10] Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" [11] 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. [12] 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. [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. [14] Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

" ' "You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive."
[15] 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 with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.'

12) Jesus explains clearly why he is speaking in parables including the reference to the Old Testament prophesy in Isiah which confirms the reason.

13) In truth, this harks back to the question we asked a week or so back, "How would God's plan have worked if everyone had believed?"

   a) There are questions here of hardening of hearts or not.

   b) Or, could it simply be that the folks who do not understand and do not see are that way because they are not seeking Jesus for who he is but instead, for what they want him to be?

   c) These are questions that we are really not able to answer but they do not change the reason Jesus gives for speaking in parables.

14) He then concludes with …

[16] But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. [17] For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

15) Those who truly are seeking Jesus, his disciples, do understand and if they don't, it will be explained to them.

   a) Bottomline is they must know what the parables mean in order to be able to continue the work of building the kingdom when Jesus returns to the Father.

16) So, continuing, Matthew gives Jesus' explanation of the Sower because it explains how parables function.

   a) Again, this is completing Jesus' answer to their question …

The Parable of the Sower Explained

18 "Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 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. 20 As for what was
sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives
it with joy, 21 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.
22 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. 23 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."

17) In addition to explaining the parts of the parable and how it applies, there is a subtle definition contained in it.
    a) A definition of how ones becomes a true disciple.
    b) Good soil for the true disciple is the heart that takes what he or she understands and uses it to inform others about the Gospel.
18) So, let's bring it to us right here and right now.

Looking at verses 16 and 17, and then the parable in verses 18-23 what are two things we would want to take from them?

a) From 16/17 – that we as disciples, are able to correctly understand Jesus' parables.
b) From 18 to 23 – we should always be the good soil.
c) Tying this back to our original questions about the parable, you can see that even if you received and understood the parable, you might still not be able to put it into your life.

1) Matthew then continues with three other parables given to the crowds, the weeds, the mustard seed, and the leaven …

Matthew 13:24–35 (ESV)

The Parable of the Weeds

24 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be
compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, 25 but while his men were
sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26 So
when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. 27 And the
servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow
good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' 28 He said to them, 'An
enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and
gather them?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat
along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I
will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned,
but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Prophecy and Parables

34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

2) Let's talk about the mustard seed and leaven parables – we will get to the parable of the weeds in a moment.
3) No one parable could amply describe the kingdom so Jesus uses several to do so.
4) The mustard seed parable explains that the kingdom would indeed have a small beginning.
   a) But, from that small beginning – Jesus' followers, from the day of Pentecost, and beyond see that growth as the parable describes.
   b) Becoming a nesting place for "all" the birds of the air perhaps gives the correct idea that the kingdom is for all the nations as he had envisioned.
   c) The truth is that it is still growing.
5) Now, turning to the parable of the leaven.
   a) In other Bible passages, "yeast" is used as a symbol of evil or uncleanness.
   b) That is not the case here.
   c) This is actually an augmentation of the mustard seed parable.
   d) Leaven is to be taken here as a positive symbol of growth.
   e) Like the parable of the mustard seed, this parable stresses small beginnings with great growth.
   f) The difference is that while the seed grows and produces a large tree, leaven permeates and transforms.
   g) This is another yet similar aspect of the kingdom.
   h) Like leaven working its way through the dough, the kingdom message would spread across the entire world.

6) Moving on, let's look at Jesus' explanation of the parable of the weeds …

Matthew 13:36–43 (ESV)
The Parable of the Weeds Explained

36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him,
saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He answered, "The
one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the
good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and
the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the
reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it
be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather
out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the
fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the
righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let
him hear.

7) Here, there is no ambiguity – Jesus has definitely stopped speaking to the crowds when the disciples come to him for this explanation.
8) This is another of the kingdom parables. In this case, the kingdom is like a man who sows good seed.
    a) Jesus is the sower and the field is the entire world.
    b) And one of the most important parts is that we and all the believers who have come before us are the good seed.
        i) We are the instruments of the kingdom's continued growth.
    c) There is another important thing for us in this parable:
        i) Even though we need to be concerned about the weeds "sons of the evil one" and not let them destroy our growth or cause harm,
        ii) We do not have to be concerned about their final disposition.
        iii) Jesus clearly tells his disciples and us that they will be dealt with and in the most appropriate way.