

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

We're going to spend some time this morning in Matthew 13 – and we're going to look at a parable Jesus once told about the end of time. But let's begin with prayer. We're asking God to come and help us. We're asking the Holy Spirit to come and do what we cannot do. "Father, we come to you in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We come asking that you would fill this place – and fill our hearts with your presence this morning. We ask that you would give us eyes to see this morning – and ears to hear – and the courage to respond to what we hear. We ask that you would convict us of our sin – and convict us of our need for a Savior. Lord, help us to see today that this world and everything it treasures is all coming to an end. Help us to live in such a way that when this world ends – we won't have to. Remind us today that the great promise of Christ is that our lives never have to end. Show us eternal life today, God. I pray in Jesus name. Amen."

Now, as I said – we're going to spend some time in Matthew 13 today – and all of Matthew 13 is one parable after another – and in each parable, Jesus is trying to help us understand what the kingdom of heaven is like. And what these parables are really trying to do – is to help us be ready when the kingdom of heaven comes. And it's not up to me to tell you if you're ready for the kingdom of heaven – and it's not for you to look at another and determine if they are ready – but we do need to examine ourselves before God and make sure that we're ready

Matthew 13: 47-50 NKJV – The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and the sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I want you to notice first of all that Jesus is referring to a specific kind of net – He says the kingdom of heaven is **like a dragnet**. There was also something called a casting net – you may be familiar with that – that’s the kind of net that you cast out by hand where you think the fish are – then you pull on it – and it catches whatever fish the net landed on. But Jesus is talking about a different kind of net here – He says the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet. That’s different than a casting net, you see. A casting net will only catch a few fish at a time – and casting nets only catch specific kinds of fish. A dragnet, on the other hand, is dragged along behind the boat – and it can catch many fish at a time – and more importantly, a dragnet will catch every kind of fish. So what Jesus is saying is – and listen, because this is so good – Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is big enough to catch every one of us – no matter what our differences might be. We have so many differences in our world – gender, age, race, politics, culture, education, income – but Jesus is saying that the kingdom of heaven is a dragnet that will bring every kind of person in. And everyone here should shout “Amen” to that! Because this means that none of us have to be left out. Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that brings in every kind.

But the story doesn’t end there, does it? Jesus says that the kingdom of God is like a dragnet – it will bring all sorts of fish in – but there’s no guarantee that all of them are God’s children. **When it was full, he drew it to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.** Do you understand what Jesus is saying here? There are many kinds of people in this world – different ages, different races, different cultures, different politics, different priorities – but in the end there is only one difference that’s going to matter – **they gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.**

Now, at this point, Jesus is still just telling a fishing story. I mean, we know it applies to

us – but still, Jesus is only talking about fish. Until He says this – **So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**” Jesus isn’t talking about fish anymore, is He? I cry out to God right now – I cry out for the Holy Spirit to open the eyes and break the heart of every person here this morning who is not right with God. Open our eyes and break our hearts until see what it would be like to stand at the judgment without Jesus

Now, as I said a little earlier in this message – this whole chapter in Matthew is Jesus telling one parable after another – and every parable is essentially the same – in every parable Jesus is telling us what the kingdom of heaven is going to be like – and He tells us what we have to do to get ready for that kingdom. In fact, this parable of the dragnet is the last parable in the chapter – and there are six parable that come before this one – and each one of them is kind of the same lesson. So why did Jesus keep telling us the same thing over and over? The only answer I can give you is – because the message is just that important! 7 parables in this chapter – and they are all very similar – but it’s better to hit one nail 7 times – than to hit 7 nails one time. Jesus hits the same nail 7 times in this chapter – and He uses different examples and different stories – but the message is always the same – Jesus is coming back to judge this world – Jesus is coming back to judge us – and we need to get ready for His return – to make sure that we are not thrown away with the bad fish. **The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire.**

Are you going to wait until that day to see which side you’re on? Are you going to wait to see if you’re thrown out with the bad fish – or do you want to decide that matter now? I need to tell you a few things now that you probably don’t want to hear – and this is not an indictment on any of you – or on our church – this is just the reality of our Christian world today: Many

who call themselves Christians are not really biblical Christians at all – they might attend church regularly – but they’ve never experienced the new birth and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Dr. James Dobson – one of the great Christian leaders in our country, said that perhaps 50% of the people who go to church in this country – 50% are lost – meaning that if Jesus came back today – 50% of the people in our churches would be thrown out with the bad fish. And I don’t know where he gets that statistic – but it sure is alarming that someone in his position would say that. And I think we all know that a great percentage of people who call themselves Christian – they don’t live any differently than the people next door who don’t even know Jesus.

I said this earlier – I’m going to say it again now – It’s not up to me to tell you if you’re ready for the kingdom of heaven – I’m not qualified to be the one who brings in the good fish and throws out the bad. But it is my job – it is my calling – it is the purpose of my life on this earth to call you to examine yourself very carefully and ask – “Am I sure I’m in the faith? Am I really born again? Do I have a daily and dynamic relationship with Jesus? Am I living differently than those around me who don’t know Jesus? Or on that great and terrible day of judgment – am I going to be discovered as a counterfeit?” Too many people sitting in churches today – and you’d never know it by looking at them – they look pretty good on the outside – but on the inside, where it matters – they are no different than the bad fish.

We have a great example of this in the Bible. His name is Judas. Judas Iscariot. He was one of the 12 original disciples of Jesus – he ate and prayed and slept and traveled and lived with Jesus for 3 years – but all the while, he was the ultimate counterfeit. And we know that now – but nobody knew it then. Not one of the disciples knew this about Judas – for 3 years, Judas was one of them – they had no reason to think otherwise. Only Jesus knew the truth about Judas.

And it’s pretty remarkable if you think about it – Judas hears the same words of Jesus all

the others hear – he hears Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount – “Blessed are the pure in heart – turn the other cheek – do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Judas was in the audience when Jesus spoke those words. And he was there when Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan – and the parable of the Prodigal Son. He was there when they asked Jesus to teach them to pray – and Jesus said to pray like this – “Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.” Judas was there to hear that for the first time! He heard all the teachings of Christ – and yet, he never truly placed his faith and his life in Jesus.

He also saw the miracles of Jesus. Imagine what that must have been like! Judas was right there when Jesus fed the 5000 with a few loaves and fishes. Judas was one of the people handing out the loaves and fishes after Jesus blessed them – he was part of that miracle. He was on that boat in the storm we talked about last week – he saw Jesus stand and command that storm to be still. Miracles were part of his daily diet. You know, I’ve heard people say that if God would just prove Himself – if I could only see a miracle – then I would believe. Well, seeing a miracle may help you – but it didn’t help Judas. He experienced all these miracles first-hand – and yet the greatest miracle of all – the miracle of salvation in Jesus Christ – he completely missed it.

I have seen miracles. I am a miracle. The fact that I’m standing in this pulpit – preaching this gospel – that’s a miracle – if you know my history, then you know my standing here this morning is nothing less than a miracle. And I know that many of you have seen miracles, too. Maybe God came through for you when you needed Him the most. Maybe you’ve had that moment when you were down – you were flat on your back – and you cried out, “Lord, if you would just show me your power – if you would just get me back on my feet, I’ll give you my whole life.” And He did it! He got you back on your feet – He did His part – but

you're still not living your whole life for Him.

Judas heard the words of Jesus – he saw the miracles of Jesus – he even saw Jesus save others. Like the Samaritan woman at the well – married 5 times – living with a man – no one would fellowship with her – no one would wanted her around – but Jesus went out of His way to meet this woman – and Jesus transformed this woman – gave her the living water for her soul – told her she would never thirst again. Judas was there to witness that. Judas saw the demon-possessed man – running around naked – cutting himself – a madman – a maniac terrorizing the people around him – and Judas saw Jesus heal that man and restore him to his right mind. Judas was there when Jesus shared a meal with Zaccheus – the tax collector who had stolen so much from so many – then Jesus gets involved and suddenly Zaccheus is paying back 4 times what he had taken. Judas had seen all these people lives completely changed – and yet, he remained unchanged. And the crazy thing is - nobody even knew it. Nobody knew.

The most remarkable thing of all is that – not only that he heard Jesus' teaching – not only that he witnessed the miracles – not only that he saw Jesus save others – but that he actually did the work of Jesus - worked right alongside the other disciples – spreading the message of Jesus – feeding the hungry – comforting the sick – proclaiming God's love – doing all these great works – and yet the greatest work of all hadn't even happened in his own heart. Judas remained unchanged by the gospel – and nobody even knew it. You couldn't have told the difference between Judas and the other disciples. Jesus knew the difference. Judas knew the difference. But nobody else could see it. **Matthew 7: 21-23.**

You know kind of thing can happen in any Christian community. And it probably does – there may be someone here today – and you like being in church – being around Christian people – doing Christian things – and you may look and sound like the real deal – but in your heart of

hearts, you know that you are not committed to the kingdom and you are not committed to the King. And we should all take a moment to reflect on this. Do our hearts and our hands and our thoughts and our time and our resources – do they truly belong to God. Because if they don't – then one day we might hear those words – **“I never knew you.”**

There is one way to make sure you never hear those words from Jesus – one way to make sure you're in the kingdom of God – you have to repent of your sin. You've got to realize that your sin condemns you before God – and you're going to be judged for your sin if you don't turn away from it – and turn to Jesus. And you don't have the power to get rid of sin in your life – if you could fix yourself, you'd have done it a long time ago – if you could save yourself, you wouldn't need a Savior – but you can't do it - you can't get rid of the sin. What you can do is have the willingness and the heart to turn away from your sin. You turn from your sin – and you turn to Jesus the Savior – the only One who can save you from your sins – the One who died on the cross to save you from your sin. The arrogance to think that you could still keep your sin – and love it – and hide it – when Jesus died for it! You go ahead and hold on to that sin if you want to – and just like Judas – you might fool us all – you might show up every week and look and sound like the real deal – but if you're still holding on to your sin – if you haven't traded your sin for His righteousness – then one day soon you will hear those words – **“I never knew you.”**

One day, these men came to Jesus and asked Him – **John 6:28** – **“What must we do to do the works God requires?”** Good question, right? It's kind of the question we're asking this morning – **“What must we do to do the works God requires?”** **29** – **Jesus answered, “The work of God is this; to believe in the one he has sent.”** You want to be secure in your faith? You want to know that Jesus is going to say, **“Well done my good and faithful servant?”** You want to

make sure He doesn't say, "I never knew you?" Then do the work of God – and believe in the one He has sent. He wants your heart to be changed – He wants to start cleaning you from the inside out – He want to come in and live within you and live through you. And all of that starts when you start repenting of your sin.

There is someone listening to me this morning – and you've claimed Christianity for years, but in your secret heart, you're not really sure. There is someone listening to me this morning – and you've been secretly doubting your salvation. There is someone listening to me this morning and you know that you've never really given your heart to Jesus – you come to church, you serve, you smile – but your heart still belongs to the world. Well, the answer is the same for every one of us – **"My hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus blood and righteousness. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."**

On Christ the solid rock I stand. I'm not standing on my good works. I'm not standing on my knowledge of the bible. I'm not standing on my tithe check. I'm standing on Jesus alone. And if you've been showing up and professing Jesus – but there's no fruit of repentance in your life – then you need to look down and see what you're actually standing on.

Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount with this story about a storm that comes and beats against your house and beats against your life – and the only ones who survive this storm are the ones who built their lives upon the rock. And the rock is Jesus – His words – His truth – His life – His heart. And Jesus said, "If you build your life on these things, then even when that storm comes – you will be safe – you will be secure."

You can start doing that right here and right now. And you would have to be a fool not to see that the storm Jesus talked about – it's real – and it's here. There is panic in our world today. There is fear and confusion – and so many people who don't know where to turn for help. I

know where to turn for help. I know where to turn. First, I turn away from my sin – and then I turn to the God of this universe who has power over every storm. Will you turn to God with me this morning? Just pray with me if you would. And remember, it's not the words that matter – it's the faith you put behind it. "God, I come to you in Jesus' name. I come to you to confess my sins. I want to turn away from those sins and turn to you, God. I believe that Jesus died on the cross – and I believe that His death on the cross was the punishment for my sin. And since Jesus paid that price for me, I don't want to live in sin anymore. But I need your help, God. I need you to come in and fill me with your Spirit – and cleanse my heart and cleanse my mind and cleanse my hands. Make me new, Lord. Make me want to be the person you want me to be. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

If you have any doubt in your mind about your salvation – why don't you settle it now? It doesn't matter if you gave your life to Jesus years ago – maybe you've drifted away. Doesn't matter if this is the first day you start truly living for Jesus. The only thing that does matter is that you're able to say, "I know today that I am secure. I know today that I am saved."