

Christ Church, New Haven
Sunday Forum: The Gospel According to St. Matthew
October 15, 2023: Matthew 11-13—Controversies & Parables

Questions for Reflection

Jesus explains the four kinds of ground on which the sower casts seeds (Matthew 13:18-23): the path, the rocky ground, thorns, and good soil. When in your life have you been like one or more these types of ground? What things today might get in the way of our ability to hear the word of God? How can we recognize and address them?

Of the parables Jesus tells the crowds and/or his disciples, which especially speak to you? Why? Are there any you find confusing or troubling?

After reading these parables, how might you describe the kingdom of heaven to someone in your life?

Notes for Matthew 11-13

- 11:2** **“When John heard in prison”:** Jesus learns of John the Baptist’s arrest in Matthew 4:12.
- 11:10** **“See, I am sending...”:** citation of Malachi 3:1.
- 11:21-24** **Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum** were all Jewish cities in Galilee. **Tyre and Sidon** were Phoenician (Gentile) cities on the Mediterranean coast. **Sodom:** see Genesis 18-19.
- 12:1-12:14** Challenges to Sabbath regulations: work on the Sabbath is prohibited, but Jesus calls into question the meaning (and limitations) of this provision. Note at 12:14 the Pharisees’ decision to “destroy him.”
- 12:18-21** **“Here is my servant...”:** a lengthy citation of Isaiah 42:1-4. The same passage is cited at Jesus’s baptism (Matthew 3:17).
- 12:31-32** **“blasphemy against the Spirit”:** St. Augustine writes the question of what these verses mean may be the most difficult question about the Bible to answer
- 12:40** **“for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth”:** See Matthew 27:62-63.

Parables—from the Greek “parabolē,” “set next to” or “set alongside,” a teaching by comparison. Note the interplay between understanding and misunderstanding as Jesus tells the parables (Matthew 13:10-11, 16-17). On prophets and parables being understood (or not), compare to Isaiah 6 and Psalm 78.

- 13:3-9** Parable of the sower (told to the people/crowds)
- 13:18-23** Parable of the sower (told to the disciples?)
- 13:24-30** Parable of the weeds
- 13:31-32** Parable of the mustard seed
- 13:33** Parable of the yeast
- 13:44** Treasure hidden in a field
- 13:45** Pearl of great value
- 13:47** Net full of fish
- 13:52** Scribe as master of a household