

Suggestions/Outlines for Preaching the Five Discourses of Matthew's Gospel

by Bob Young

Matthew's gospel is characterized by five major discourses or teaching sections. These are clearly marked in the text by parallel concluding phrases (Matt. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). One can identify the teaching sections by looking at what immediately precedes these verses. For example, the first of the discourses is the Sermon on the Mount, the middle discourse includes several "kingdom of heaven" parables, and the last discourse includes the parables of the virgins and talents as well as the judgment scene.

In contemporary oration and teaching, most discourses present a conclusion. (One exception is those sermons that ramble and eventually just stop rambling!) Good speeches end by answering the question, what is the point? In summary, what should one remember? So it is in the teachings of Jesus. Each of the discourses has a point which we can identify. The final focus, the final words, indicates to us the point of the teaching. What is the conclusion?

In this series of sermons, each of these five teaching discourses is studied.

Following is a list of the titles in the series.

- KINGDOM PEOPLE. Who will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom? Who is a true disciple? (Matthew 5-7, Sermon on the Mount)
- KINGDOM PURPOSE. Kingdom choices and consequences: true disciples accept the mission (Matthew 10, sending out the Twelve)
- KINGDOM PRIORITIES. What matters most in the kingdom: true disciples see what is hidden (Matthew 13, parables of the kingdom)
- KINGDOM PRINCIPLES. Life in the kingdom, how does a true disciple live? (Matthew 18, kingdom of heaven controversies)
- KINGDOM PARABLES. When the king comes, identifying true disciples (Matthew 25, parables and judgment)

Following is another description of the five discourses.

#1—Mountain Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, with disciples present
- Topic: KOH Introduced [ye have heard it said, contrasts]
- Next: Crowds marvel, then Jesus goes to the temple, with result in 9:35-38

#2—Mission Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples, Jesus enlists others in the task
- Topic: KOH Followers
- Next: Result is increasing opposition from Pharisees

#3—Parables Discourse

- Listeners: Crowds, then explanations to disciples
- Topic: KOH Nature
- Next: Result is offense (13:57)

#4—Relationship Discourse

- Listeners: Disciples
- Topic: KOH Principles
- Next: Result is Pharisees testing Jesus

#5—Judgment Discourse

- Listeners: written to all
 - Topic: KOH Outcomes
 - Next: Jesus' crucifixion
-

SERMON #1: KINGDOM PEOPLE

Who will enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom? Who is a true disciple?

(Matthew 5-7, Sermon on the Mount)

Introduction

Matthew is literary masterpiece, Jewish background, OT quotes, thematic consistency, Jesus comes as a servant king.

The presence of Jesus [Matt. 1:23, 28:18-20]

Two divisions [Matt. 4:17, 16:21]

Theme of Part I [Matt. 4:23, teaching/preaching/healing]

Three discourses occur in the first section.

Sermon Content

To preach the Sermon on the Mount as a part of this series, one should give careful attention to the themes of kingdom and discipleship.

See my article with multiple suggestions for preaching the Sermon on the Mount:

http://www.bobyongresources.com/preaching/matthew_preaching-the-sermon-on-the-mountain.pdf

SERMON #2: KINGDOM PURPOSE

Kingdom Choices and Consequences: True Disciples Accept the Mission

(Matthew 10, instructions when sending out the Twelve)

Introduction

Matthew is a literary masterpiece, Jewish background, OT quotes, thematic consistency, Jesus comes as a servant king.

The presence of Jesus [Matt. 1:23, 28:18-20]

Two divisions of Matthew [Matt. 4:17, 16:21]

Theme of Part One [Matt. 4:23, teaching/preaching/healing]

This is the second of three discourses that are in the first section.

Introduction to Matthew 10

This discourse is not easy to outline, there are few internal markers; basic observations.

Jesus establishes his authority; then he calls the Twelve to give them authority (10:1). He shares authority with his followers so they can participate with him and help accomplish his mission.

The intensity of the human needs around him may have moved Jesus to this decision. He could not personally meet all the needs. He needed help; he had to share the task. When more workers are needed in the harvest, Jesus powerfully sends forth those workers.

Were the Twelve excited to receive this commission? Did the thrill and pride dampen as Jesus explained the life of those who were given this kind of task, power and authority? This is not a life of pomp and luxury, but of service; not with coercive power (a recurring theme in Matthew, cf. Herod). Jesus comes as a servant king and his followers must be servant followers. Some will receive this truth, some will reject it. Authority is granted for the purpose of serving.

Here we have a manifesto of Jesus' principles, the nature of discipleship, kingdom followers.

Jesus' first-century disciples give us a paradigm, so all are Jesus' contemporaries participating in Jesus' mission. This text addresses the church as a missionary church.

Analyzing the Text

The text reveals the demands of discipleship in the first century. As the disciples are sent out, we understand the challenges and opportunities of "then". We see the lifestyle of the authentic disciple described.

The "how" of discipleship.... (Note how hard these things are)

Depending on God (5-11)

Giving others freedom to accept or reject the Lord (12-15)

Expecting and enduring persecution (16-23)

→ Looking to Jesus as their example, expecting the same as he received (24-25)

Remembering their great value (26-33)

Expecting conflict (34-39)

Helping others to be rewarded (40-42)

The Disciples Exhorted and Commissioned, 5-15ff

→The "how" of discipleship.... (note how hard these things are)

Depending on God (5-11)

Giving others freedom to accept or reject the Lord (12-15)

→ Principles

With regard to the honor possessions, go forth dependent

With regard to the honor of power, go forth without coercion

With regard to the honor of praise, go forth expecting opposition and persecution

[Note textually significant words: Worthy (11), peace (13), receive (14)]

→ Jesus asked them to do the impossible, to dare the impractical, and to deliver the impartial!

The Disciples Encouraged, 16-23

As Jesus sent out his apostles, he prepared them. They were to be as sheep among wolves, humble, expecting problems, depending on God. They were to expect and endure persecution.

The Disciples' Example: Like Teacher, Like Master (10:24-25)

Expect what Jesus got; don't expect to be treated better....

Expect hostility, 16-20; expect rejection, 20-23, 34-38; Expect to win, 26-33

The Disciples' Experience (10:26-42)

Remembering their great value (26-33)

Expecting conflict (34-39)

Helping others to be rewarded (40-42)

*Because of the value of the kingdom, act without fear (opposite = faith?), 26-33

*Because of the worth of the kingdom (suitability, loyalty), without peace [no peace, 34]. Instead of peace there is division and conflict, [worthy, 37-39]; such loyalty focuses the great paradox of Christianity

*Because of the purpose of the kingdom, accept the privileged position [receive, 40-42, || ch. 18]. If the debit side of discipleship is in view in this chapter, there is a credit—the privilege of being recognized as Jesus' representative.

-Received, as one entrusted to do Jesus' work.

-Rewarded, as righteous, in the name of, in his capacity as...

-Recognized as representatives, the hospitality mentioned was taken for granted in that day, deserving no reward, this is not philanthropy but simply receiving someone because he is a disciple. "Little ones" (cf. ch. 18). The disciple is placed in the privileged position of representing Jesus who represents God, and whose reception is the test of one's attitude to God, leading either to reward or loss. Here is comfort for those who find the world against them because they belong to Jesus.

There is little here about the content of the preaching (preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand); the focus is on behavior and destiny. Discipleship is about behavior (dependence, poverty, defenseless...)

The reason Matthew speaks of behavior and destiny is that disciples are images of Jesus: discipleship means conforming to the life of Christ and following his model. The defining property of Christ-likeness is not words, but deeds. To be the church means to assume the commission and authority of Jesus, to live as he did, to suffer as he did; to be the church is impossible without discipleship.

SERMON #3: KINGDOM PRIORITIES

What Matters Most in the Kingdom: true disciples can see what is hidden

(Matthew 13, parables)

Introduction

Matthew is literary masterpiece, Jewish background, OT quotes, thematic consistency, servant king.

The presence of Jesus [Matt. 1:23, 28:18-20]

Two divisions [Matt. 4:17, 16:21]

Theme of Part One [Matt. 4:23, teaching/preaching/healing]

This is the final discourse in the first section.

Introduction to Matthew 13

Matthew 13; end of parables discourse

What matters most in the kingdom: Kingdom priorities

True disciples can discern/discover what is hidden; the surprising kingdom

Church is mentioned twice in gospels, kingdom hundreds of times. Kingdom is bigger than the church!

Parables confound the theologian or philosopher but delight the children and simple

The Kingdom is no novel invention that needs a PR job! Its communication isn't showy but simple.

The parables illuminate the subject of the kingdom for those who are willing to accept the message and of darkening it for those who reject the message of the present reality of the kingdom.

The kingdom message of Jesus was the most radical message the world has ever heard. Here is a true revolution, not launched with guns, tanks and soldiers but with a wandering preacher in Galilee.

Quote: 'The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance, and recoiled in dismay from even a half apprehension of its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions of mankind. For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within.... It is true that he said his kingdom was not of this world, that it was in the hearts of men and not upon a throne; but it is equally clear that wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new....'

Focus Text

Begin at end; 13:52—not really a parable, perhaps an illustration, some lists of parables include it some do not.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a combination of the old and the new treasures

The Kingdom of Heaven is unpredictable, it is unexpected.

What does this Kingdom of God look like? Images of the Kingdom of God inspire us and help us see what is hard to see. Like prophets before him, Jesus uses parables. His parables speak about common people—farmers, gardeners, merchants, fishermen, women. The metaphors of the kingdom—hidden treasure, a precious pearl, a tiny seed, yeast—move from specifics to the infinite. Whatever the Kingdom is like, it is surprising and yet found in ordinary places. Like a seed, it is characterized by slow organic growth, it demands watchfulness because it is hidden

and it is precious beyond measure. The Kingdom is accessible anywhere, anytime, to all, for all who intentionally enter Christ's reconciling work.

Outline

Chapter 13 includes 7 parables, 6 parables of the form, "KOH is like...."

The first parable (sower) is not of this form, but is a kingdom parable.

The conclusion uses the illustration of a householder

The parables are presented below in a form that demonstrates possible symmetry or chiasm.

Sower

***Weeds**

****Mustard seed**

*****yeast**

→ **Explanation of parable of weeds**

*****Hidden treasure**

****pearl**

***Net**

Householder

Notice the possible parable pairings--

Weeds and net...

Same general lessons, final separation of righteous and wicked, do not make separation prematurely.

Existence of good and evil continually; day of reckoning is coming.

The KOH is not easy—the KOH faces continuing challenges.

Mustard seed/yeast

Here are lessons of influence, gradual growth and influence, and surprising results.

Hidden treasure/pearl

Lesson of value, priorities, desire

Explanation

Coming of Son of Man who sends his angels

Weed out everything that causes sin and those who do evil

Weeping and gnashing of teeth

SOWER/SOILS

Does not use formula "koh is like," but disciples see it as a parable, v. 10

The secrets of kingdom are given to those who understand the parables. The knowledge of the koh is not given to everyone. Fulfillment of prophecy, some will not understand. Blessed are those who see and hear.

Parable explained

WEEDS (spoken to people)

MUSTARD SEED (spoken to people)

YEAST (spoken to people)

Mustard seed and yeast show great results from small beginnings, remarkable growth of kingdom

Note: unique to Matthew, explanation of how unbelief is fulfillment of OT prophecy

Parable of weeds explained (to disciples)

HIDDEN TREASURE, poor man stumbles, accidentally finds the treasure (spoken to disciples)

PEARL, seeking the treasure (spoken to disciples)

Hidden treasure and pearl are unique to Matthew; koh is of such worth that all must be sacrificed to attain it

NET, the distinctive kingdom separates people (spoken to disciples, do you understand?)

Conclusion

Householder, every teacher of the law...

Treasures old and new, new does not replace the old but builds upon it, Jesus himself is the teacher described, so this paragraph is the controlling paragraph for all that precedes it in our study. We should try to understand the relationship between the old and the new in this chapter, what is old, what is new. May have been a dig at the Jewish scribes who could produce only what is old, tattered, worn, misunderstood and misapplied.

Focus	Parable	Expectation	Unexpected
CHOICE	Sower	Messiah rules all nations.	Individuals respond to God's invitation.
COMMON	Weeds	Citizens rule world with Christ.	Citizens live among people of the world.
SMALL	Mustard seed	Kingdom is majestic glory.	Kingdom begins in insignificance.
CONTROL	Yeast	Kingdom rule is coerced.	Kingdom rule comes through influence.
COST	Treasure	Kingdom is public, visible to all.	Kingdom is hidden, individual purchase.
COMMITMENT	Pearl	Kingdom brings valued things.	Kingdom is to abandon earthly values.
ENDURE	Net	K. begins w/ separation of unrighteous	K. endures to separation of unrighteous

What is new/old in this section?

CHOICE--Kingdom choice, kingdom power is not coercive, the kingdom of God is chosen, seed sown

COMMON—Kingdom exists in common life

SMALL—kingdom begins in small, insignificant ways; kingdom expands little by little

CONTROL--The kingdom power is of God, the rule of God, the control of God, weeds growing together; fish gathered; the kingdom power is great results from small beginnings, remarkable growth

COST—kingdom is available to all, but cost is high

COMMITMENT--The kingdom price is invaluable

ENDURANCE—the kingdom exists not for itself

CHALLENGE--The kingdom challenge is freshness

Conclusion

Although the kingdom is hidden, it can be found. When one finds it, one should make whatever sacrifice is necessary to obtain it. Given the kingdom's value, one must overcome every obstacle to obtain it. The sole point being made is that the kingdom is worth everything. The kingdom principle is that sacrifice for something worthwhile is no sacrifice at all and will be rewarded. Missionaries often say at the end of their ministry, 'I sacrificed nothing.'

The kingdom is a source of joy and riches but not as some would want! God doesn't promise earthly riches, but treasure you may not see or value. God meets us in hidden place when things are tough and the treasure we find makes it all worthwhile.

The kingdom CAN be understood. When understood right there will be new things to say—new things that are relevant to our society. We will learn to work out for ourselves the way that the kingdom can be hidden yet revealed!

If we seek the kingdom all other things will be added to us.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES

Life in the kingdom, how does a true disciple live?

(Matthew 18, kingdom of heaven controversies)

“LIFE IN THE CHURCH: Seven Essentials”

[Recommended book: Tommy South, doctoral dissertation on all NT passages treating disfellowship, articles for NT Studies, rewrote materials into a practical book, That We May Share in His Holiness: a Fresh Approach to Church Discipline.]

Note the teaching sections, formula, and use 19:1 as beginning point.

v. 1, importance of humility, absolutely essential

v. 5, importance of receiving one another

v. 6, importance of not causing any brother/sister to sin

v. 7, importance of not causing yourself to sin

v. 10, importance of every believer, every member in congregation.

Every believer has angels in the presence of God.

Note: Look at Jesus' illustration

v. 15, importance of our relationships one with another in the church

Another way of saying how important every person is in the church

The process suggested here is focused on the importance of people/relationships—involve as many people as necessary to restore the relationship.

In the context of this paragraph, v. 18-20, applies to the church and the disciplinary action

v. 21ff, absolute importance of forgiveness

KINGDOM PARABLES

When the king comes, identifying true disciples

(Matthew 25, parables and judgment)

Reference 26:1 and parallels as beginning point.

Consider reviewing the series thus far.

The last word in the last teaching section in Matthew: eternal life, lit., life eternal.

5 parables on preparation—

24:37 as it was....so it will be

householder 24:42....

25:1 like....

25:14 like....

25:31 = parabolic prophecy.

Check out parallel constructions from 24:37 to 25:30

24:37, as it was...

24:42, therefore keep watch

24:43, householder

Conclusion, 25:51, w/g of teeth

25:1, koh will be like...

25:13, therefore keep watch

25:14, it will be like...

Conclusion, 25:30, w/g of teeth

25:31, when the son of man comes....

Text = 25:31-46, Glory as God himself, glorious throne, picture of king

Before him would be gathered (divine passive)....

25:34, only time Jesus ever refers to himself as King

What an invitation, final invitation

Inherit your place in the kingdom.

Four times in same order, these things are listed—hunger, thirst, stranger, clothing, sick, prison.

Good people don't remember all the good things they do.

This is a summary of how the King's followers treat people. All of life, this is the standard, this

is normal. These are examples. How know that? Two "C"s: context and common sense. Are

we helping people? Are we servants? Are we ministers?

We have influences we never know about.