



More Parables (13:31-50)

The Mustard Seed (verses 31-32)

This is a small and insignificant seed but grows into a large tree. God's kingdom started in a small way, with one man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was despised and rejected. Yet when he returns to this earth, the kingdom will grow to fill the whole earth.

The Treasure Hid in a Field (verse 44)

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure that is hid in a field". When the man finds it, he conceals it and with great joy sets about selling everything he has to buy the field. We must look carefully in the Bible to understand God's plans for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Jesus promised, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* (Matt. 7:7).

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (verses 45-46)

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls". When the pearl of great value was found the merchant sold everything he had in order to purchase it. The pearl is God's plan for our salvation and it must be more precious to us than anything else in our lives.

Jesus' teaching through these parables

The Gospel message is available to everyone who will listen and obey the call of Jesus to repent and be baptised. We must search in order to find and understand Bible teaching. God offers us a priceless treasure, but it will not be for everyone because there will be a time of judgement when Jesus Christ returns. Only those who have tried to serve God in faithfulness will be allowed to enjoy His Kingdom.

Chapter 14: Moved with Compassion

The Death of John the Baptist (14:1-12)

The cruelty of Herod the Tetrarch is shown in his wicked treatment of John the Baptist who was murdered to please Herod's dinner guests. John the Baptist had spoken against Herod for taking Herodias as his wife because she was already the wife of his half-brother Philip.

When news reached Jesus of John's death, he went to a place where he could be alone, probably to mourn and to pray. Yet the crowds followed him, travelling on foot around the Sea of Galilee and meeting Jesus when he arrived by boat. Jesus did not send them away, instead he had compassion on them, preaching the gospel, healing those who were ill and feeding the hungry.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:13-21)

This is the only miracle of Jesus written in all four Gospels, and it is an important one, for it shows:

- Jesus' concern for people's physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.
- His great power, he could feed five thousand men and their families from a few loaves and fish.
- How Jesus showed, in giving thanks to God, that all good things come from his Father.

John's Gospel (John 6:9) tells us that the five loaves and two fish were given by a boy. Jesus was able to satisfy the physical needs to all who were hungry. The important lesson for us is that Jesus can satisfy our eternal needs if we are hungry his teaching because he is *"the bread of life"*.

Temptation (14:22, 23)

In John's Gospel we are told that when the crowd saw this amazing miracle they said:

"This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" (John 6:14)

This was a time of temptation for Jesus, just like the temptation he had experienced in the wilderness before his ministry started. He knew that he was born to be King of the Jews but he had to die first. He realised that this was a time of temptation so he moved away from the people:

"Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself." (John 6:15).





Imagine how important the twelve Apostles would feel because Jesus had involved them in this great miracle by asking them to distribute the food! Jesus knew how unhelpful this would be to their spiritual development and that it was best to remove them from temptation by sending them away from the crowd by sea.

There are lessons for us here! Most of us probably want people to think that we are important, but God requires humble service from those who love Him. When we face temptation we need to quickly remove ourselves from it and pray for help to overcome the temptation.

An Old Testament prophet called Elisha, used God's power to feed a hundred men in a miracle similar to this (2 Kings 4:42-44). Elisha was a type of Jesus – he pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, just as Elijah, the prophet before him, pointed forward to John the Baptist (see the lesson on chapter 11).

HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Elijah and Elisha could do miracles, but there were very few other people in Old Testament times who could do miracles by God's power.

Great men of God like Abraham and David did not have Holy Spirit gifts to perform miracles, although they were inspired by God to speak His word as prophets. Elijah and Elisha lived at a time when most of the people of Israel were worshipping false gods and the Lord God was showing His people that He was far greater by working miracles through these two prophets.

The demonstration of God's power would support the message that was preached, just as the Apostles were provided with Holy Spirit gifts to help with their preaching (Mark 16:20).

Jesus at Prayer (14:22-23)

After feeding the 5,000 Jesus sent his disciples by boat to Bethsaida (read Mark 6:45) while he dismissed the crowds. He still wanted to be alone in quietness of the mountains as the darkness of the night closed in, to pray for strength from his Heavenly Father for the work and sacrifice that was ahead of him. When we have problems we should remember the example of Jesus and pray to our Father committing ourselves to His tender care.

Walking on the Water (14:24-36)

Jesus always cared for his disciples. He knew they were in difficulty in the boat facing high winds on the Sea of Galilee. In the fourth watch (that is between 3am and 6am in the morning) Jesus came walking on the sea to save them from the storm.

John 6:22 tells us that on the previous day, when Jesus sent the disciples away, they had used the only boat available, so Jesus had no transport to reach his disciples. This was not a problem for the Son of God, even though it was stormy! But Jesus did not walk on the water to impress people. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water they were terrified but Peter had the faith to get out of the boat and go to meet his Master, though when he took his eyes off Jesus he began to sink.

Disciples of the Lord need to keep trusting their Master so they do not 'sink' when they think about all the troubles around them. The writer of Psalm 18:16 says: *"He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters."*

When Jesus saved Peter from drowning and when they both got into the boat the wind immediately stopped and they came safely to land at Gennesaret. Jesus then went on to heal all who came to him from the whole region.

Jesus describes the troubled nations as being like *"the roaring of the sea and the waves"* (read Luke 21:25) When he returns to set up *"the Kingdom of Heaven"* on earth he will subdue and calm the nations and his followers will be safe from all the storms of life. What a wonderful comfort it is to know Jesus cares for those who follow him in sincerity and truth.

