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Reception and Rejection; Matt 13:51-58

GPBC

3.1.20

Introduction – At this point in the ministry of Jesus, He has performed enough miracles, healed enough people, and preached enough sermons that everyone in the region is basically aware of who He is, who He claims to be, and the amazing things He has done. As Matthew stated earlier, Jesus went about teaching, healing, and proclaiming the kingdom. From eyewitnesses to those who have heard through the grapevine, the story of Jesus has spread. And as the news of Jesus spreads, so does the division concerning Jesus. There are those who embrace and believe and follow and find new life in Him. And there are those who refuse to believe whether they think the tales too fanciful or they are entirely opposed to Him and His message. Just as some absolutely believe in Him, some absolutely reject Him.

That's the way it's always been, and that's the way it always will be until He returns at which point no one will be able to oppose Him or deny His Lordship! When we reach the end of ch13, we get a glimpse at how some receive and some reject. By the time we finish studying through our text this morning, the question for us will be are we among those who receive Jesus or are we among those who reject Him.

- I. Reception of Jesus and its Results (vv51-52)
  - a. When you receive Jesus, you begin to understand the things of God, the things of the kingdom, the things of the gospel. Before we are born again and trust Christ as Savior, we cannot fathom, we cannot understand the truths of God. Sin clouds our understanding. But when we've been made new, our new hearts begin to clear and open new minds to receive the things of God.
    - i. 1 Cor 2:14 "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." In other words, you have to be spiritually alive to grasp spiritual truth.
  - b. Jesus asks the disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" And they said, "Yes." Now we know Jesus was not asking did they

understand everything there is to know about the kingdom, and they were not declaring to have complete knowledge of all things of God. He was specifically asking them had they grasped the truths of the kingdom He had been teaching in the preceding parables.

- c. Remember Matt 13 is a collection of 7 parables of Jesus on the kingdom of God.
  - i. The parable of the sower explained that the gospel is scattered among many hearers, but it only finds reception in good soil, in receptive hearts. Proclamation.
  - ii. The parable of the weeds explained that true faith and false faith may look similar in appearance at first, but eventually false faith will show itself to be fruitless. Distinction.
  - iii. Next followed the two parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. These two parables answer a concern that arises from the first two parables of the sower and the weeds. It seems in those two parables that true faith is relatively small in comparison to unbelief. With the sower, you only have  $\frac{1}{4}$  reception. With the weeds, even some who appear to believe actually do not believe. So it seems that the kingdom of heaven is very few. These two parables explain that while the kingdom may begin in a small manner, it will grow and expand until it reaches the ends of the earth. Expansion and Influence.
  - iv. Next you have the two parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value. These two parables answer another question that arises from the first two. If only a  $\frac{1}{4}$  receive and if among those who initially profess to believe, some are not true believers, then how do you know when faith is true? How do you know when faith is genuine at its onset? The parables of the treasure and the pearl teach us that true faith is demonstrated in the willing release of everything that keeps us from Christ and the joyful embrace of Christ as our sufficient Savior, as all we need! Joy and Value.
  - v. Then finally Jesus taught the parable of the net which explained that on the day of judgment, those who reject Christ will enter into everlasting judgment described as fiery and weeping and those who are found to be righteous in Christ will be saved. Harvest.

- d. Jesus asks His disciples, "Have you understood all these things?" And they said, "Yes." Meaning they believed these truths to be true. They believed the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. They embraced and followed Christ as Savior and Lord.
  - e. The question is posed to each one of us today, "Have you understood all these things?"
  - f. In other words, if you have understood the things of the kingdom of heaven, the things of the gospel, then you are to open up your heart and share this good news with others!
  - g. What is this old and new? The old is the Promise; the new is the fulfillment. We no longer have only the old; we have the new. We have Christ.
  - h. Reception leads to rejoicing. Profession leads to proclamation. Believers are to be heralds of the treasure they have found that brings so much joy it is worth losing everything else to have it!
  - i. The results of receiving Jesus are understanding the gospel and then sharing the gospel.
- II. Rejection of Jesus (vv53-56)
- a. What we discover in these verses is that the rejection of Jesus runs deeper and is far wider than we would have imagined. For even those in His own hometown of Nazareth refuse to believe in Him.
  - b. It couldn't have been easy and it must have been especially difficult for Jesus to experience this particular rejection. It's easy to see why the scribes and Pharisees rejected Him. He was overturning their false view of salvation, He was exposing their manipulation through religion, He was shining a light on their hypocrisy, and He was drawing the people away from their influence. Of course, they would reject Him. But His own town. The neighbors He grew up knowing, the kids He grew up with, the people He knew for so long. This was His home, and He was not welcome.
  - c. They were astonished as He taught, but it wasn't the astonishment of seeing the Light, of hearing the truth, of their eyes and hearts being opened. It was the astonishment of envy and disregard and malicious spite.
  - d. Their series of questions were not posited in search of an answer but rather to make their point. Who does He think He is? We know Him.

He can't be the Messiah. It doesn't matter what He says or what He has done. He's just a common nobody. He has no qualifications. He doesn't come from soaring stock. He's nothing!

- e. Imagine, the Son of God, the only way of salvation, right there among them, teaching them, and they wholeheartedly refuse to trust in Him for no other reason than they knew who His parents were and had watched Him grow up.
  - f. Familiarity with God can ironically sometimes be the greatest deterrent to faith. You can be so close and so familiar with the things of God that you can't see their glory because they are so familiar, so ordinary to you. That's why some of you have not gladly, humbly, joyfully repented and embraced Christ. You've heard the gospel so many times, your ears have grown dull to the glory. You're so accustomed to being in church and hearing the Bible stories and sitting in worship, that it all seems so rather ordinary and dull and fanciful and difficult to believe. It's all around you, and you don't believe it. Even the mighty works of Jesus didn't convince His neighbors! They thought they already knew Him, and therefore, they never really knew Him.
  - g. Don't be like the people of Nazareth – unable to see Jesus because you think you've seen Him already.
- III. The Results of Rejecting Jesus (vv57-58)
- a. Eventually unbelief leads to offense just as belief leads to understanding. You not only grow used to Jesus, you grow tired of Jesus. A hardened heart never reverses course on its own; it just grows harder.
  - b. A second result of rejecting Jesus is that Jesus knows when He's rejected. He knows. He knows when He has been offered and is willing to save and is willing to bear your sin to the cross and put an end to your separation from the Father and die on your behalf, and you then turn and walk away as if He is not the Fountain of Life, as if your way is better, as if your sin is more valuable and satisfying than the treasure of the universe! He knows.
  - c. Finally, unbelief results in missing out on all that God is for us in Christ, missing real life, abundant life, for a life that remains spiritually dry, empty, dead, and lifeless.

Conclusion – Oh, He has far more in store for you than you could ever imagine, in this life right here and now and forever in the life to come. But the question remains, are we among those who receive or among those who reject.