

Matthew 13A

- Israel has rejected Jesus, and He's withdrawn the Kingdom proposal from that generation of Israel
 - He has pronounced judgment and has left Israel's "house" desolate
 - He will leave earth shortly, and He will not return until Israel reverses its collective denial
 - So for 2,000 years and counting, the world awaits Israel's change of hearts so that the Kingdom may finally arrive
 - We'll have much more to say about this in future chapters
 - But for now, the question is what comes next?
 - And the answer is training... Jesus now shifts His focus from persuading the masses to privately training His disciples
 - For the next 16 chapters, Matthew shows us all that Jesus poured into these men in preparation for their mission in His absence
 - And this gives us a lot of opportunity to learn as well, which is why Jesus' training has been preserved in the Gospels
 - And along the way, we will also find moments of humor, because these men just didn't get what Jesus was doing, at least not in the moment
 - They didn't understand that Jesus was going to depart the earth instead of setting up the Kingdom
 - They certainly didn't understand He must die even though Jesus told them that repeatedly
 - So their confusion becomes opportunity for humor on many occasions
 - But make no mistake, this preparation is a serious business, because souls are on the line – both then and now
 - And that's our purpose in studying it too
 - We aren't the twelve, but we're still disciples
 - And all disciples are called to learn from our Master and then implement what we learn

- So their training program is every bit our training program too
- Matthew introduces the second half of his Gospel with a moment that sets the tone for how Jesus will interact with the people moving forward

[Matt. 12:46](#) While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.

[Matt. 12:47](#) Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.”

[Matt. 12:48](#) But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?”

[Matt. 12:49](#) And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers!

[Matt. 12:50](#) “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

- This scene didn’t take place in the immediate circumstances of Chapter 12
 - But Matthew elected to record this event here as a transition into the second half of his Gospel because it captures Jesus’ shifting priorities
 - Mark 3 tells us that Jesus returned home to visit His family in Capernaum about this time
 - Remember Jesus moved His mother and brothers to Capernaum from Nazareth at the start of His ministry
 - In Mark we read this:

[Mark 3:20](#) And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

[Mark 3:21](#) When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, “He has lost His senses.”

[Mark 3:22](#) The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

- Jesus tried visiting His family at home, but the crowds that accompanied Jesus were so imposing, Jesus couldn’t even share a meal with them
 - And as the family saw this and heard what Jesus was saying, they were in shock

- Mark says they were ready to take custody of Jesus, which meant to literally forcibly take Jesus home to stop all this nonsense
- They concluded that Jesus had gone insane
- It's no surprise that His earthly brothers assumed Jesus was crazy, because we know from John 7 that they weren't believers
 - Only after the resurrection do Jesus' earthly brothers come to faith in Him
 - But did you notice Mary joined them in this conclusion?
 - Which surprises us because we know Mary had the revelation of the angel before Jesus' birth and saw Jesus' miracle at Cana
 - Nevertheless, whatever she understood of Jesus' ministry, it hadn't prepared her for what she was witnessing now
- It's tempting to look down on Jesus' family for not having more faith in Him at this point, but don't we do similar things to other people?
 - When someone's life is turned upside down by an encounter with Jesus and they become on fire for Jesus, don't we sometimes wonder about their behavior
 - We all have our idea of what the "proper" response to Christ should be
 - And when someone's response falls outside those boundaries, we worry about them
 - We might think that the person is strange, "touched", or worse
 - Has anyone in your family ever thought that about you?
 - Certainly, people can have mental issues, and sometimes religious zealots need help dialing back their passion
 - But there is another possible explanation for why they make us uncomfortable
 - The problem might not be they are crazy...maybe the problem is we're lazy
 - That person is willing to be a fool for Christ, to put it all on the line, to move heaven and earth to obey Him

- They've reoriented their entire earthly life to serve Jesus
- Meanwhile, we've tried to fit Jesus neatly into our suburban middle class lifestyle
- We pursue Jesus in ways that still allow us to pursue a nice house, 2 cars and 2.5 kids with time for golf and more
- So when we rub elbows with Jesus freaks, we feel convicted, but we tell ourselves they've gone off the deep end
 - Like Mary did...like Jesus' brothers did with Jesus
 - Jesus lived out His ministry so dramatically that it shocked everyone including the religious leaders
 - If we are His disciples, we can't be afraid to live like we are...and we certainly can't be afraid to make sacrifices if He requires
- So that's the situation here...Jesus' family (including His mother) have come to take Him away
 - Ironically they can't get close to persuade Jesus to come home because the adoring crowds were too dense
 - So the crowd passes word to Jesus that His mother and brothers were outside seeking to speak with Him
 - Look what Jesus says to the crowd
 - In v.48 Jesus asks, who are my mother and brothers?
 - I'm sure the crowd must have thought this was a dumb question
 - After all, wasn't the answer obvious? Maybe Jesus really has gone mad, they wondered. Doesn't He even recognize His own family?
 - But then Jesus points to His disciples nearby and says, "Behold my mother and my brothers"
 - He says they are those who do the will of the Father in Heaven
 - Now obviously, Jesus was speaking about a spiritual family in contrast to the earthly one that waited for Him outside
 - He says in v.50 that those who do the will of the Father are His mother and brothers

- But we need to be careful here that we don't overstate or understate what Jesus saying
- What does doing the will of the Father mean?
 - We get a more specific understanding in Luke's account

Luke 8:21 But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

- According to Jesus in Luke's account, doing the Father's will means obeying what the Father tells us in His word
- But that's not a general reference to obedience, and we know that because of the outcome Jesus connected to that action
 - He says that obeying the will of the Father is what makes us part of the family of God...it's what makes us saved
 - But we know that it's faith that makes us part of God's family, not our works of obedience
- So that tells us that Jesus was talking about something else here...in fact, He was talking about obeying the Gospel itself
 - Obeying the Gospel is a phrase that the New Testament writers use, referring to accepting the Gospel and coming to faith
 - A believer is someone who obeys the call of the Gospel to believe in Jesus, while an unbeliever disobeys that call

2Th. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

2Th. 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

2Th. 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2Th. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

- The context of Jesus' statement in Matthew 12 reinforces this interpretation

- We know Israel as a nation had just failed to heed the call of the Gospel by rejecting Jesus as their Messiah
- And as a result the nation committed the unforgivable sin, and as such most have failed to become part of God's family
- But the crowds (and even His unbelieving brothers) were acting as if their earthly relationships with Jesus was enough
 - So when Jesus' family arrives, they assume Jesus would give His family members priority over the strangers in the crowd
 - They assumed Jesus would demand that His family be brought through the crowd, cutting in to the front of the line
- We all have earthly family...it's impossible to exist physically on earth without parents
 - Even Jesus had earthly relatives at least in the sense of blood relationships, though Joseph wasn't Jesus' father
 - But blood relationships only last for as long as we live on earth, and in death those bonds are broken
 - At the moment you die, your relationships with earthly parents, earthly siblings, and your spouse all dissolve
 - And any status or advantage those relationships conferred upon us also come to an end
 - Only our spiritual relationships transcend death
 - First and foremost our spiritual relationship with Christ is most important, because it brings us into glory with the Father
 - But along with our relationship with God, we also have spiritual relationships with every other believer
 - Believers in Jesus are our spiritual family, and those relationships will last forever
 - If you've ever wondered why Christians will call each other brother or sister, it's because by our faith in Jesus we have become a family
 - These are the people you will spend eternity with
 - That's why Jesus says that those who do the will of the Father are His brothers and sisters...we are His brethren by faith

[Heb. 2:10](#) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

[Heb. 2:11](#) For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

- So Jesus told the crowd that His earthly relationships with Mary and His brothers were of no significance – which would have shocked the crowd
 - This was a patriarchal culture that held parental authority in high regard
 - After they told Jesus that His family wanted to see Him, they expected Jesus to demand the crowd part like the Red Sea
 - And instead, Jesus showed preference to the disciples who came in faith over the blood relatives who came to oppose Him
 - If you have a relationship with Jesus by faith, then you also have an eternal relationship with everyone who shares your faith
 - That community is your eternal family, and those relationships matter now...even more than any earthly relationships you have
 - We need to invest ourselves in those spiritual relationships even more than the earthly relationships we have by blood
 - Now, hopefully your earthly relatives are also your spiritual relatives
 - But if not, then if and when the two come into conflict you need to prioritize the spiritual over the physical
 - That's especially true if those earthly relationships impede your obedience to God
- That's what was happening for Jesus
 - We know that Jesus' family was coming to stop Him because they thought Jesus was doing the wrong thing
 - In that moment, Jesus had a choice...obey His earthly mother or obey His Heavenly Father
 - Had Jesus agreed to meet, then what do we suppose would have happened?

- They would have demanded He leave and then Jesus would have had to say no, dishonoring His mother in public
- Instead, Jesus was unwilling to even meet with them and in that way He avoided the scene and remained obedient to the Father
- And when you face similar struggles, don't be afraid to prioritize your relationships with the Lord or other believers over family
 - Yes, we honor parents and seek to be at peace with all people so long as it depends upon us
 - We certainly aren't called to eliminate earthly relationships nor to dishonor them
 - But we don't make those priorities greater than our obedience to the Lord, just as Jesus demonstrated here
- Knowing this, we should make a priority of converting as many of our earthly family into heavenly family as the Lord may permit
 - That outcome isn't in our hands, obviously, but making an effort sure is
 - And we should make that effort because the Lord may work through our efforts to bring faith to those we love
 - And if He does, those earthly relationships will last for eternity and will become richer and more meaningful even now
- And there's another implication we need to consider here
 - If our spiritual relationships persist into eternity, how are you nurturing those relationships now?
 - Have you considered that the fellow believers in the body of Christ generally are the ones you will work with in the Kingdom?
 - You will know them for an eternity as your spiritual family, and they will know you
 - So how are you approaching those relationships now? Are you dealing with them with eyes for eternity? Are you showing them love?
 - Are you forgiving of them? Are you gentle with them? Are you honest with them?
 - How do you want them to remember you in eternity?

- When you pass each other walking the streets of the Kingdom, how will that encounter go?
- If you struggle in maintaining healthy relationships with your spiritual brothers and sisters, you need to make addressing that issue a priority
 - Don't run from your struggles with people...don't church hop so you can avoid reconciling or repenting
 - Because you can't run forever...one day we stand together in glory with our memories intact
 - We want to enter that place with a good testimony and good relationships that honor Christ
- Elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus teaches a parable about how we should use our money while we are on earth
 - And at one point Jesus concludes this way

Luke 16:9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

- Jesus says that we should make friends with our earthly wealth so that when we enter eternity, they receive us well
- Jesus is talking about our brothers and sisters remembering how we treated them while we lived with them here
- So consider how you're building those relationships now, including with your believing spouse
 - Husbands, your believing wife may be under your authority now, but she is also your sister in Christ
 - And in the Kingdom she will *only* be your sister, so you should consider how she will remember your treatment of her now
- And wives, your believing husband is your brother in the Lord
 - So if you are unwilling to respect his role over the family now, how will he remember you later?
 - And the same is true for how our pastors, elders, teachers, counselors, and everyone in the Church remembers us

- So Matthew has now set the standard for how things move forward in Jesus' ministry...Jesus puts priority on those of faith
 - Everything He does from now on focuses on His spiritual family only
 - We will see that change play out in a variety of ways beginning immediately at the start of Chapter 13

Matt. 13:1 That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea.

Matt. 13:2 And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

Matt. 13:3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;

- Chapter 13 begins with the parable of the sower and seed, which we will cover next week
 - In that parable Jesus teaches on four conditions of people
 - And if you have ever wondered about the meaning of that parable, then don't miss next week
- But our interest tonight is on the mere fact that Jesus is teaching in parables at all
 - You may take that for granted, since everyone knows Jesus taught many parables
 - His parables are some of His best known teaching even among unbelievers
- But if you're paying attention in this study, you will notice that this is the very first parable Jesus teaches to the crowds
 - And that may not seem like a big deal, but it is
 - Because if you've ever found parables hard to understand or confusing
 - Or perhaps you wondered why Jesus taught in such an obscure fashion, you're not alone
- Look at v.10 in Chapter 13
 - The disciples noticed Jesus' abrupt change in teaching style, and they were confused too

- This was a new thing, something Jesus hadn't done before, and it reflected His new priorities
- We'll look at this more next week, but for now let me catalog how Jesus' ministry will change moving forward
- First, as we see here Jesus no longer teaches openly to the crowds
 - Since Israel committed the unforgivable sin, the time for openly teaching them has come and gone
 - Instead, Jesus will now only teach those who have faith
 - His spiritual insight is limited for those who can appreciate it and will need to understand it as they serve Jesus in the Kingdom program
 - That means Jesus will only teach His disciples in private
 - In public settings, Jesus will obscure the truth by teaching only in parables
 - He begins teaching in code relying on the Spirit of God to explain the meaning to those elected by God to receive it
 - Secondly, Jesus will only perform healing miracles for those who demonstrate faith first
 - Up to this point, Matthew emphasized over and over again that Jesus healed "all" who came to him

[Matt. 4:24](#) The news about Him spread throughout **all** Syria; and they brought to Him **all** who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He **healed** them.

[Matt. 8:16](#) When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and **healed all** who were ill.

[Matt. 9:35](#) Jesus was going through **all** the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing** every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

[Matt. 12:15](#) But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He **healed** them **all**,

- Until Chapter 12, Jesus used His healing ministry to draw an audience for His Kingdom proposal
- That was before Israel rejected that message
- Now that Israel has rejected Him, there's no need to draw that crowd...now He's ministering to His sheep only
- Thirdly, Jesus will no longer openly declare the Kingdom is at hand as He once did
 - Remember how Jesus went about in the first half of Matthew's account...

[Matt. 3:2](#) "Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand."

[Matt. 4:17](#) From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the **kingdom** of heaven is at hand."

[Matt. 10:7](#) "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The **kingdom** of heaven is at hand.'

- Jesus told everyone in Israel that they could have the Kingdom if they would receive Him
- But after His rejection, He speaks of the Kingdom program only with those who will carry it forward
- Scan down again to v.11 of Chapter 13, and notice Jesus says that only His disciples are appointed to understand the future Kingdom
- Fourthly, in times past, Jesus encouraged His disciples to share the good news with everyone
 - He even equipped His disciples at a point with the power to do miracles so they too could attract an audience for the Kingdom message
 - And He certainly didn't try to silence anyone
- But beginning now, Jesus specifically warns those He heals or teaches not to share what they know about Him with anyone
 - Often these people were so excited by their encounter that they chose to disobey the Lord's instructions, but the point is clear

- Jesus is no longer seeking to win over crowds or spread the news of the Kingdom
- He's working with only with those who will serve Him in the Kingdom Program
- Finally, as Matthew alluded to in Chapter 12, the time had come for the Kingdom to reach more than Israel alone
 - Before His rejection, Jesus only ministered to Israel and only taught Israel and only offered the Kingdom to Israel
 - Remember when Jesus sent out His disciples earlier in this book, He gave them these instructions:

[Matt. 10:5](#) These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans;

[Matt. 10:6](#) but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

[Matt. 10:7](#) "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

- It simply wasn't appropriate for Jesus to offer the Kingdom to the Gentiles before it had gone to those to whom it was promised
 - The Lord is in covenant with the Jewish people, not the Gentiles
 - And only after the Jewish people refused the Kingdom did it go to anyone else
- Before Chapter 12 and Israel's rejection of Jesus, the Kingdom was for Israel – but now it will go to a wider audience
 - In fact, Matthew 13 is best known as the Kingdom parable chapter of the Gospels
 - In this chapter, we are going to study parable after parable about the nature of the Kingdom
 - And one of those parables explains that God's plan is to invite all tribes and tongues and nations into the plan of salvation
 - That open door is a direct result of God passing over His own people for a time
- So what's our takeaway from seeing this change in Christ's ministry...well, for me it's the overwhelming confidence in God's sovereign plan for His children

- As Matthew showed us in Chapter 12, Israel's rejection and the Gentiles' inclusion in the plan of God was foreknown and preplanned by God
 - He told us about it in advance through the prophets, so nothing happening here is taking God by surprise
 - With God, there is no Plan "B"...everything that happens is part of Plan "A"
- And knowing this, we can take great encouragement in facing the trials and difficulties of our own life
 - Nothing you're facing has taken God by surprise...in fact, He has ordained that it take place in your life
 - And since we know God is good all the time, then we must conclude there is some good purpose in Him placing these things in our life
- Just as we seek to understand this Gospel account in detail with a full appreciation of what it all means, seek to understand the events of your own life with equal clarity
 - Knowing and trusting that the Lord has good purposes in it all
 - Praise Him for trials, praise Him for suffering, praise Him for disappointments
 - Because when you do, you're praising Him for the good things they will bring in your life even before you know what those things are
 - You may not know the good God is doing in your life until you enter Heaven and get the full story