

As we pursue the theme of the *heart-softening power of the Word of God* in this summer's notes, let us learn the value of hearing God's Word, trusting that it will exercise our hearts and prevent them from becoming thick, dull, fat and unresponsive!

Monday: Read Matthew 13:11-17 and 13:34-35**The Deaf Hear, The Blind See**

We grieve at the hardening of men's hearts, when they reject the clear Gospel for so long that they eventually lose all the spiritual knowledge which they originally possessed: "Even what they have is taken from them" (Mt. 13:12). But we must not miss the promise which the parables hold for those who hear them with faith. For such these parables become jewel boxes, meant to adorn the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and designed to draw all followers of Christ into a deeper understanding of God's saving grace.

Moreover, it was God the Father's plan from the beginning to conceal Kingdom truth in such a way that faith alone could receive it. In Matthew 13:34-35, Jesus declares, quoting Psalm 78:2, that God sent His Son to proclaim long-hidden truths of the Kingdom of God. Parables were the vehicle for such precious revelation.

Mediate and Pray: Let us ponder that great mystery of salvation which is revealed now, though hidden for ages past. How privileged we are to have these parables and the truth they illustrate. Many longed for such revelation but never saw it, as Jesus says in Matthew 13:17. May God grant us gratitude for the blessings of having our ears and eyes opened.

Tuesday: Read Matthew 13:16-17, 13:34-35 and Psalm 78:1-4**The Secret Revealed**

Not even the most hard-hearted rejection of the good seed in the Parable of The Sower can erase the good news that God's Son has come in human flesh to reveal the long-hidden secrets of His Father's Kingdom. Jesus' parables are, in fact, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Asaph in which the Messiah speaks in "parables" and "utters things hidden from of old." What a moment of destiny for us, therefore, is Christ, the long-awaited revelation. As Psalm 78:3-4 describe it, God's people respond to the Messiah, as He utters Kingdom parables, with the promise that they will in turn pass them on to the next generation: "Things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us - We will not hide them from their children..."

Meditate and Pray: What a privilege for us to be the recipients of the good and fruitful seed of Jesus' teaching. What a responsibility to then pass on that teaching to the next generation. As hymn # 364 puts it, (in words expressing our commitment to the next generation of the church),

*Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger days we saw,
And which our fathers told.*

*Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
And they again to theirs
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.*

*So make to them his glories known,
His works of power and grace;
And we'll convey his wonders down
Through every rising race.*

*To learn that in our God alone
Their hope securely stands,
That they may never doubt his love
But walk in his commands.*

Weds/Thurs: Read Matthew 13:16-17, 13:34-35 and Psalm 78:1-4**Personal Privilege**

As Jesus speaks to his disciples of the great blessing of having the parables unfolded to eyes and ears of faith. Jesus is going to make sure that they understand clearly the Kingdom treasures given to them by God. How? By His own personal explanation to them. This same level of personal instruction from the Risen Lord continues in the Church of every age. By His Spirit, who is called, “The Spirit of Truth,” Jesus instructs His Church in the things of God as they are revealed in the Scriptures.

For example, Psalm 78 (Mt. 13:34-35) is a prophecy about personal instruction. Note especially Psalm 78:2, as quoted in Mt. 13. The stress is on the “mouth” of the Messiah which delivers the parables. What grace! Jesus draws near to speak with His own mouth, through His Word, to each of our hearts! This is what the Reformer Musculus said about the “mouth of the Messiah” being personally opened to each of us as believers:

Why then is there any notice taken of the *mouth*? Because those who can prescribe laws to their subjects are also those who scorn to address them with their mouth. Such is the custom of kings, princes, pontiffs, both Roman and others. For the higher every one rises in dignity, the less he considers it becoming to him to speak to the people, to teach and instruct them by word of mouth. They think they owe nothing to the people, but are altogether taken up with this, that they may be looked up to as princes, and so retain a certain secular majesty of command. But, with one's own mouth to teach the ignorant, is a singular proof of love and paternal affection, such as becomes the preceptor, pastor and teacher. This Christ most constantly employed, because he was touched with paternal affection towards the lost sheep, and came as a shepherd to seek them. The manner of earthly princes he therefore rejected, and clothed himself with that paternal custom which becomes the shepherd and teacher, going about and opening his mouth in order to give instruction. Rightly, therefore, was the Prophet not content with saying, *Give ear, O my people, to my law*: he adds, *Incline your ears to the words of my mouth*. Thus he indicates that he was about to address and instruct them with paternal affection.

quoted in Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*

Meditate and Pray: Remember with thankfulness the personal condescension of Jesus to open the Scriptures to us! He does not rule us arrogantly, sending commands from afar. How did the disciples on the Emmaus road put it? *Were not our hearts burning as He opened the Scriptures to us?* “O Lord, please personally deliver your word into our very hearts as needed by each one! Amen.”

Friday: Read Matthew 13:16-17, 13:34-35 and Acts 1:1-4**Savior, Lord, and Guide**

Jesus’ forty-day post-resurrection ministry to His disciples is the ultimate example of his willingness to come close to personally teach each of His followers. As soon as His sufferings and death were over and He was raised from the dead, He turns His mind to strengthening those in His church who would remain on earth after He ascended to Heaven. Jesus knows that His church would not survive one day without His nourishing instruction. So, with many proofs of His bodily resurrection, and with clarifying teaching about the nature and purpose of God’s Kingdom, Jesus lays the sturdy foundation on which the church of all ages would be built.

Paul describes this crucial forty-day period of our Lord's instruction of His followers:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he **appeared** to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He **appeared** to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time...

1 Corinthians 15:1-6

Meditate and Pray: How gloriously personal and intimate those forty days of teaching were! Jesus even sought out Peter alone – knowing how that fallen Apostle would need specific, personal, pastoral care and restoration! Even more, this same personal ministry continues in our day – since Christ has given His Holy Spirit to His church to indwell, instruct and protect her! Sing about Christ's ongoing teaching ministry in His church, using hymn # 348:

*Jesus, with Thy Church abide,
Be her Savior, Lord, and Guide,
While on earth her faith is tried:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*

*Keep her life and doctrine pure,
Help her, patient, to endure,
Trusting in Thy promise sure:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*

*May she one in doctrine be,
One in truth and charity,
Winning all to faith in Thee:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*

*Judge her not for work undone,
Judge her not for fields unwon,
Bless her works in Thee begun:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*

*All that she has lost, restore,
May her strength and zeal be more
Than in brightest days of yore:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*

*Raise her to her calling high,
Let the nations far and nigh
Hear Thy heralds' warning cry:
We beseech Thee, hear us.*