

A Brief Analysis of the Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13

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Introduction

In his Gospel, Matthew presents five primary discourses of Jesus. Matthew 13 is the third of these discourses, each ending with “and it happened, when Jesus had finished...” (cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Matthew presents Jesus’ teaching in chapter 13 as a major turning point in his ministry.

The focus of Matthew 13 is the “kingdom of heaven.” Matthew uses this phrase thirty-two times in his Gospel, whereas Mark and Luke prefer “kingdom of God.” Both phrases connote the same meaning. According to Luther’s *Large Catechism*, the “kingdom of God” is

[s]imply what we learned in the Creed, namely, that God sent his Son, Christ our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil and to bring us to himself and rule us as a king of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience. To this end he gave his Holy Spirit to teach us this through his holy Word and to enlighten and strengthen us in faith by his power.¹

John Schaller states, “Jesus often introduced his parables with the formula, ‘The kingdom of God is like unto, etc.’ meaning to say, ‘Where God the Savior begins to influence men with the power of his grace, such and such results will follow.’”²

Also keeping in mind that βασιλεία is a noun with roots in the verb βασιλεύω, it is best to conceptualize ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν as a term that Jesus employs to emphasize God’s/His saving activity among men. God’s kingdom is not, that is, a static entity limited to locales or particular people. God works wherever Jesus is, and wherever his Word (the message of his saving work) is proclaimed.

Thus Christ’s kingdom has reality in the past, present, and future. Since he is eternal, so also his kingdom. Jesus uses the parables of the kingdom not only to preach about himself; he uses them to preach himself.³ Jesus is the embodiment of the Gospel; the kingdom parables are the same Gospel message.

A useful tool in systematizing what Jesus presents about himself in Scripture is the threefold distinction of his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Jesus himself alludes to these three offices in Matthew 12, when he says he is greater than the temple (v. 6), thus making himself the quintessential priest; greater than Jonah (v. 41), thus making himself the quintessential prophet; and greater than Solomon (v. 42), thus making himself the quintessential king.⁴ In each of the kingdom parables of Matthew 13, does Jesus emphasize various aspects of these offices as he presents himself and his saving work and message?

¹ *The Book of Concord*, Theodore G. Tappert, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 426-427.

² *Biblical Christology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1981), p. 201.

³ “And now, what was the message which Christ the Prophet brought to the world? Christ Himself was the burden of Christ’s preaching; the Apostles, too, preached only Christ . . . In other words, Christ proclaimed not only that salvation had come (‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ Matt. 4:17), but that it had come In His Person.” (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951], p. 336.) Also, Adolf Hoenecke states about Christ: “...his principal work is the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven...” (*Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, vol. III [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2003], p. 169).

⁴ See David P. Scaer, *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics: Christology* (Ft. Wayne, IN: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, Inc.), pp. 50ff. for a history of the use of the terminology of the three offices.

This paper will analyze the six “kingdom” parables⁵ in Matthew 13 exegetically, determining the emphasis, interrelationships with the other Matthew 13 parables, and primary points of each. Throughout this analysis the centrality of Christ and his three-fold offices will be investigated.

The Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat - Matthew 13:24-30 (36-43)

Text

24 Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Ὡμοιωθῆ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ. **25** ἐν δὲ τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἐπέσπειρεν ζιζάνια ἀνὰ μέσος τοῦ σίτου καὶ ἀπῆλθεν. **26** ὅτε δὲ ἐβλάστησεν ὁ χόρτος καὶ καρπὸν ἐποίησεν, τότε ἐφάνη καὶ τὰ ζιζάνια. **27** προσελθόντες δὲ οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότης εἶπον αὐτῷ, Κύριε, οὐχὶ καλὸν σπέρμα ἔσπειρας ἐν τῷ σῷ ἀγεῶ; πόθεν οὖν ἔχει ζιζάνια; **28** ὁ δὲ ἔφη αὐτοῖς, Ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦτο ἐποίησες. οἱ δὲ ἀοῦλοι λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά; **29** ὁ δὲ φησιν, Οὐ, μήποτε συλλέγοντες τὰ ζιζάνια ἐκριζώσητε ἅμα αὐτοῖς τὸν σῖτον. **30** ἄφετε συναυξάνεσθαι ἀμφοτέρα ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ, καὶ ἐν και πῶ τοῖς θερισταῖς, Συλλέξατε πρῶτον τὰ ζιζάνια καὶ δήσατε αὐτὰ εἰς δέσμας πρὸς τὸ κατακαῦσαι αὐτά, τὸν δὲ σῖτον τὴν συνάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου.

Translation

(24) Another parable he placed before them, saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good/excellent seed in his field. (25) But while (the) men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat/grain and went away. (26) Now when the blade sprouted and it produced fruit, then appeared also the tares. (27) And the servants of the master of the house, after coming to [him], said to him, ‘Lord, did you not sow excellent/good seed in your field? Therefore how is it it has tares?’ (28) And he said to them, ‘An enemy, a man, has done this.’ And the servants say to him, ‘Then do you desire [that] after going we gather/pull them (in)?’ (29) But he said, ‘No, lest while gathering (in)/pulling out the tares you might uproot together with them the wheat/grain. (30) Allow both to grow together until the harvest, and in/at the season of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “Gather in/pull out first the tares and bind them together into bundles for burning them up, but the wheat/grain gather into my barn.””

Analysis

Key vocabulary

- (24) Ἄλλην - adj. acc. f. sg., other, another, probably “another” here since it follows the parable of the sower and soils; set forward for emphasis.
- (25) ζιζάνια - noun nom. pl. n.; “a particularly undesirable weed resembling wheat and possessing a seed which is poisonous” (Louw-Nida); *zizanium, darnel, tares, weeds*.
- (26) ἐβλάστησεν - aor. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. βλαστάνω; *sprouted, budded, put forth leaves*.
- (27) τοῦ οἰκοδεσπότης - art. + noun gen. sg. m.; *master of the house, householder*.
- (28) συλλέξωμεν - aor. act. subj. 1 pl. fr. συλλέγω; *pull out/up; gather by plucking or picking*.
- (29) ἐκριζώσητε - aor. act. subj. 2 pl. fr. ἐκριζόω; *uproot (pull put or up by roots)*. Used four times in NT, two times in Mt.

⁵ For the purposes of this paper the initial parable of the soils is not included, since in it Jesus does not make the direct comparison, “The Kingdom of heaven is like ...” However, this omission should not be interpreted to mean that the parable of the soils does not pertain to the kingdom of heaven.

- (30) συναυξάνεσθαι - pres. pass. inf. fr. συναυξάνω; *to grow together, to grow side by side.*
 τὴν ἀποθήκην - art. + noun acc. sg. f.; *barn, storehouse, granary.*

Syntax

- (24) The aorist passive Ὁμοιώθη indicates “that the Kingdom of Heaven...is a present reality and already has a certain history behind it. This recognition is of the utmost importance for interpreting the parable of the Tares.”⁶
- (25) ἐν..τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους - ACI temporal clause; while the men were sleeping. The definite article simply indicates the class as a whole - “while people were sleeping.”
- (27) The question of the servants expects an affirmative answer (οὐχί). They are not questioning the master of the house so much as they are expressing bewilderment. Their use of πόθεν in their subsequent question adds to their surprise, perhaps even translated as “Why?”
- (28) The question asked by the servants makes use of a deliberative subjunctive (συλλέξωμεν). Whether it is a real subjunctive (a genuine question expecting a resolution of the problem) or a rhetorical subjunctive (making a statement) is debatable. In the context, one might view it either way. If one sees the angels as being a little indignant about the presence of the weeds, it would be best to understand the question as rhetorical. Jesus’ answer in v 29, since it instructs the angels concerning their conduct, might also indicate a rhetorical question.
- (30) The three aorist imperatives directed to the angels (Συλλέξατε, δῆσατε, and συναγάγετε) all point to the actuality and finality of the last judgment. This day will definitely occur.

Interpretation

Matthew begins this account with an explicit description of what Jesus proceeds to do: he “placed another parable before them” (v 24). One can picture Jesus laying out what he wants to teach as someone would spread out a map or a chart before observers. The interpretation of this parable is not difficult: at the request of his disciples, Jesus himself gives its interpretation in vv 36-43.

The context of this parable is the explanation of details about the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom referred to in the parable of the soils. Donald A. Hagner states that the introductory phrase Ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν “reflects an underlying Aramaic construction that is to be understood as ‘it is the case with ...as with...’”⁷ An interesting feature of this parable is the identification of the “man” (v 24) which Jesus gives in v 37: “The one sowing the beautiful/good seed is the Son of Man ...” This identification is not surprising in the context, since the “one sowing” (v 3) in the parable just prior (the parable of the soils) is also *probably* Jesus.⁸ The καλὸν σπέρμα (v 24) is anarthrous, emphasizing the beautiful nature of these “sons of the Kingdom” (v 38), especially in contrast to the weeds (“all scandalizing things and the ones doing lawlessness” - v. 41). The contrast between Jesus’ sowing and that of his enemy demonstrates that Jesus has placed his adopted children into the world amongst the “sons of the evil one” (v 38) to grow and prosper in their faith. Believers and unbelievers must exist side by side on this side of eternity. Thus the ἀγπός represents the present world.

Jesus also emphasizes the action of the sowers (the Son of Man vs. the enemy), not that of the believers or unbelievers who are passive. Augustine takes issue with this:

⁶ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1969), p. 67.

⁷ “Matthew’s Parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:1-52),” Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), p. 109.

⁸ While such an identification is not made in the parable of the soils, from the greater context of Scripture it is a fair assessment to make. This detail need not be pressed in the parable of the soils, since the primary focus is on what happens to the Word that is sown.

See what *we* choose to be in his field. See which of the two we will be at harvest time. The field is the world, and the church is spread throughout the world. Let the one who is wheat persevere until the harvest; let those who are weeds be changed into wheat.... But in the Lord's field, which is the church, at times what was grain turns into weeds and at times what were weeds turn into grain; no one knows what they will be tomorrow.⁹

This coexistence continues only until Jesus sends his angels (v 39) for the final ingathering. God's purpose in allowing the sons of the Kingdom to coexist with unbelievers is so that his children will not be harmed in their faith (v 29; 2 Pe 3:9, 15). The final destruction of the "sons of the evil one" will definitely come, but it will be at the time appointed by Jesus himself (ἐν καιρῷ - v 30). The final salvation of the sons of the Kingdom will occur at the same time.

The primary point of this parable: even though believers must coexist with unbelievers in the present world, Jesus will return and give final victory and glorification (v 43) to his children. Jesus' words in Jn 16:33 summarize this parable well: "These things I have spoken to you that you may have peace in me; in the world you have tribulation/distress, but take courage, I myself have overcome the world." Jesus' office of Prophet is in the foreground through his "sowing" of his children; i.e. they were brought to faith in him through his Word. Jesus' priestly office is also seen in the background in his constant care and mediation for his precious children. Finally, Christ's kingly office is in the background of this parable, since his rule over the world is absolute: he controls the continuance of the world and its final demise, especially pertaining to how such continuance will benefit his people. He also is the final arbiter in the determination of man's destiny.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed - Matthew 13:31-32

Text

31 Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως, ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος ἔσπειρεν ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ. 32 ὁ μικρότερον μὲν ἐστὶν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων, ὅταν δὲ αὐξηθῇ μείζον τῶν λαχάνων ἐστὶν καὶ γίνεται δένδρον, ὥστε ἐλθεῖν τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατασκηνοῦν ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ.

Translation

(31) Another parable he placed before them, saying, "Of the same nature/like is the Kingdom of Heaven to a kernel/seed of a mustard plant, which, after taking, a man sowed in his field; (32) which is smaller than all the seeds, but when it grows it is greater than the garden herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the heavens come and make nests/settle in among its branches."

Analysis

Key vocabulary

(31) Ὁμοία ἐστὶν - adj. (pred.) nom. f. sg. + pres. act. indic. 3 sg.; *of the same nature is, like is*. The switch to this construction from the previous parable does not change any nuance of the comparison.

κόκκῳ - noun dat. m. sg.; *seed, kernel, grain*. The dative is for the comparison (following ὁμοία).

σινάπεως - noun gen. n. sg.; *mustard plant*. "The precise species cannot be determined, and some may grow to a height of three or more meters" (BDAG 924). The genitive is possessive.

⁹ "Sermon 73A.1," Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament vol 1a: Matthew 1-13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), p. 277 (emphasis added).

- (32) *λαχάνων* - noun gen. n. pl.; *garden herbs, vegetables, edible plants*. The genitive is of comparison.
κατασκηνοῦν - pres. act. inf. fr. *κατασκηνώω*; of birds, *make a nest, settle* (lit., *pitch one's tent*).
κλάδοις - noun. dat. m. pl.; *branches* (of a tree or woody shrub).

Syntax

- (31) Note that here Jesus uses *κόκκος* instead of *σπέρμα* for “seed.” He may do this to juxtapose the single grain with the collective grain.
- (32) Should *μικρότερον* be taken in the comparative (superlative) sense or in an elative sense (“smaller than all...” vs. “very small compared to...”) ? Some argue that since the mustard seed is not the smallest seed, *μικρότερον* cannot be understood in the comparative sense. Daniel B. Wallace states:

Apart from our modern-day scientific knowledge, few would understand *μικρότερον* as an elative. Like 1 Cor 13:13, a comparative adj. followed by a gen. should be taken in a comparative way; in both cases the comparison is between more than two items and hence functions as a superlative. Other approaches (all of which take *μικρότερον* in a superlative sense) are as follows: (1) *σπέρμα* is used, indicating a sown seed; the mustard seed is the smallest of all sown seeds; (2) within the world of Palestinian farmers, the mustard seed was the smallest seed; (3) the statement is proverbial (hence, Jesus is alluding to the proverb for rhetorical effect). Grammar does not solve this problem, of course, but it does lean in one direction (viz., comparative for superlative).¹⁰

Both infinitives (*ἐλθεῖν* and *κατασκηνοῦν*), following *ὥστε*, indicate actual result.

Interpretation

This parable is compact and pithy. Again Jesus uses the simile of a man sowing seed. In this parable Jesus directly compares the Kingdom of heaven to the seed instead of to the man sowing the seed (cf. previous parable). Jesus emphasizes the seeming insignificance of the seed by comparing it to that of a mustard plant.

From an earthly standpoint God's kingdom does not appear to be of much consequence. God's Word and sacraments, which engender and foster his kingdom, do not appeal to the eye of man as inherently powerful means. So also, Jesus' arrival in this world (again, the *ἀγρός*) as the embodiment of the Kingdom/Word was not grandiose but simple. The almighty Son of God clothed himself in human flesh, condescending to become like man in all respects, even being tempted (yet without sin - He 4:15). Considering the identity of this “seed,” he was “smaller” than all others.

It is not man's perspective that matters here, however. God's Word is powerful (He 4:12; Ro 1:16). His sacraments, the visible Word, wield the same power. Since Jesus is fully God, he is almighty. Silently the Kingdom grows and flourishes, in the end exceeding all (human) expectations. The mention of the birds nesting in the branches of the mustard plant also expresses the untold growth of the tiny seed.

The primary point of this parable: God is powerful. He uses His Word to build his Kingdom. Man is not able to discern the power of the Word of God until its effects become visible. Jesus' office of Prophet is seen in the background of this parable, as he proclaims his Word to the world and is himself proclaimed. As Jesus' kingdom grows, then is one able to take notice of it. Believers in Jesus have the confidence that in spite of any negative conditions or influences around them (cf. previous parable), Jesus is all-powerful.

¹⁰ *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p. 301.

The Parable of the Yeast - Matthew 13:33

Text

33 Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς, Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ζύμη, ἣν λαβοῦσα γυνὴ ἐνέκρυψεν εἰς ἀλεύρουσάτα τρία ἕως οὗ ἐζυμώθην ὄλον.

Translation

(33) Another parable he spoke to them, “Of the same nature/like is the Kingdom of Heaven to yeast/leaven, which, after taking, a woman hid in three measures of wheat flour until all of it was leavened.”

Analysis

Key vocabulary

(33) ἐλάλησεν - aor. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. λαλέω; *spoke, uttered, proclaimed*. There really is no difference between the essence of this introduction and that of the previous two parables; it is simply less picturesque.

ζύμη - noun dat. f sg.; *yeast, leaven* (lit., a small amount of dough reserved to start a new batch of dough). Generally used throughout Scripture in a negative sense, but also in a positive sense.

ἐνέκρυψεν - aor. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. ἐγκρύπτω; lit., *hid in, concealed in*; pertaining to dough, *mixed in, put in*.

ἀλεύρου - noun gen. n. sg.; *wheat flour, meal, ground wheat*.

Syntax

(33) The lack of the article with ζύμη indicates that the penetrating quality of the leaven is being emphasized. Note the passive voice of ἐζυμώθην, indicating that the dough/flour was being leavened.

Interpretation

Jewish ears would have perked up at the mention of ζύμη. The chemical and physical action of yeast was so all-pervasive that Old Testament law forbid God’s people from even having leaven in their households during the Passover celebration (Ex 12:15, 19). Generally, in biblical figures of speech yeast was portrayed as an evil influence (e.g., Mt 16:6, 11-12; Ga 5:9). Since the yeast represents Christ’s word in this parable, its influence is definitely not to be viewed as negative here. The pervasive influence of the yeast is what is stressed in this parable.

Ancient commentators interpreted the “three measures” in interesting ways. Hilary claimed a reference to the triune God; Jerome saw a reference to “the three passions of the human soul” (reason, anger, desire); and Theodore of Mopsuestia believed Jesus made reference to the Greeks, Jews, and Samaritans, making them all one in Christ.¹¹ Such interpretations are not only fanciful; they also attempt to push past the main point of comparison of the parable.¹²

The primary point of this parable: God is powerful. The *tertium* in this parable, directly mirroring the previous parable, is the growth of the Kingdom of heaven. Again the hidden power of God’s Word is pictured by the comparison to the hidden (to the human eye) work of yeast. And again, just as the results of the work of the yeast are clear, so also with the Kingdom of heaven. The effects of yeast are also all-pervasive: it penetrates the whole. Wherever God’s Word is, it cannot help but have an effect on all around it (Is 55:11).

As in the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus’ office of Prophet is illustrated here. His word is the force behind the growth of his Kingdom.

¹¹ Simonetti, pp. 281-282.

¹² David Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), pp. 90ff.

The Parable of the Hidden (and Found) Treasure - Matthew 13:44

After the Parable of the Yeast, Matthew includes commentary concerning the purpose of Jesus' parables, concentrating on Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (vv 34-35). Thereafter Jesus dismisses "the people" and explains to his disciples the Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat (vv 36-43). Following that explanation Jesus launches into the final three parables of the chapter.

Text

44 Ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν θησαυρῷ κεκρυμμένῳ ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, ὃν εὐρῶν ἄνθρωπος ἔκρυψεν, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτοῦ ὑπάγει καὶ πωλεῖ πάντα ὅσα ἔχει καὶ ἀγοράζει τὸν ἀγρὸν ἐκεῖνον.

Translation

(44) Of the same nature/like is the Kingdom of Heaven to a treasure having been hidden in the field, which, after finding, a man hid, and from his joy he goes and sells all whatever he has and buys that field.

Analysis

Key vocabulary

(44) θησαυρῷ - noun dat. m. sg.; *treasure, store* (that which is stored up). The dative is for the comparison (following ὁμοία).

κεκρυμμένῳ - pf. pass. ptc. dat. m. sg. fr. κρύπτω (or κρύβω); *having been hidden, concealed, kept from being seen*. The participle is attributive to θησαυρῷ, indicating a key characteristic thereof.

χαρᾶς - noun gen. f. sg.; *experience of gladness*; by metonymy, *a state of joyfulness; a person or thing that causes joy*; by metonymy, *joy*.

πωλεῖ - pres. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. πωλέω; *sells* (exchanging possessions for money).

ἀγοράζει - pres. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. ἀγοράζω; *buys, purchases*.

Syntax

(44) The lack of the article with θησαυρῷ emphasizes the very precious and valuable nature of this treasure. The relative clause introduced with ὃν indicates that Jesus is going to explain something important about the treasure.

The aorist tenses of εὐρῶν and ἔκρυψεν depict the action as crisp and precise: right after the man found the treasure he hid it immediately.

The present tenses of ὑπάγει, πωλεῖ, ἔχει, and ἀγοράζει are historical to add to the vivid nature of the account.

Interpretation

This parable is introduced the same way as the previous two parables (mustard seed and yeast). In this parable Jesus compares the Kingdom of heaven to a treasure, a very precious commodity. One way of stating the introduction to this parable might be, "Where God's saving activity comes, here is the way it operates. It is like a treasure" The key feature of this treasure is that it is κεκρυμμένῳ. This treasure was not visible to the usual methods of perception.

The prepositional phrase modifying the concealed treasure reveals the reason why the valuable commodity was hidden: it was ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ. The 21st-century western mind does not fully grasp this concept.

The 1st-century eastern mind would have immediately recognized the implication of this description. In a region frequently overrun by warring people (cf. Old Testament history), Jewish natives were accustomed to hiding valuables by burying them, especially when they traveled or were themselves involved in war.¹³ “The tenuous political conditions that prevailed at the time of Christ prompted people to bury their treasures for security.”¹⁴ To be gleaned, therefore, from this aspect of the parable is that what was buried was quite precious.

Here again the person acting in the parable is simply an *ἄνθρωπος*. Who is this man? Some would argue that, if it is understood in the first three parables of Mt 13 (soils, weeds in wheat, and mustard seed) that the person acting is God/Jesus, the *ἄνθρωπος* here should be understood as representing God. However, to promote such an interpretation probably presses a detail that need not be pressed. Furthermore, it is not explicit from the texts of two of the previous parables themselves (soils and mustard seed) that the “man” is God/Jesus. The focus on the *tertium* of the parable under consideration dictates that the treasure and its fantastic value be emphasized, not the *ἄνθρωπος*.

The common interpretations of this parable may be summarized thusly: the treasure hidden in the field is Christ Jesus or the Kingdom of God/heaven. The field is sometimes considered to represent the Scriptures, for therein is Christ.¹⁵ The “man” is simply any person who is presented with the Kingdom for consideration. Upon seeing the incredible worth of Christ/the Kingdom, he does everything within his power to make this treasure his own, including re-hiding it in his eagerness to own it.¹⁶ The finder-man is so overcome with jubilation at the prospect of owning the Kingdom that he spares no expense or effort in acquiring it.

When that great joy, surpassing all measure, seizes a man, it carries him away, penetrates his inmost being, subjugates his mind. All else seems valueless compared with that surpassing worth. No price is too great to pay. The unreserved surrender of what is most valuable becomes a matter of course. The decisive thing [is not what the man gave up] but the reason for [his] doing so; the overwhelming experience of the splendour of [his] discovery.¹⁷

One difficulty with such an interpretation of this parable: what is man’s reaction to his initial encounter with God or his kingdom? Steeped in sin, man’s initial reaction to the holy and awesome God is anything but joy. Consider the reaction, for example, of Isaiah when he encountered God in a vision: “Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for *I am ruined!* Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts’” (Is 6:5; NASB, emphasis added). One New Testament example will suffice here: the reaction of the shepherds when the angel announced to them the Savior’s birth: “And an angel of the Lord appeared (suddenly) to them [the shepherds] and glory of the Lord shone around them, and they *feared great fear*” (Lk 2:9; emphasis added).

Another difficulty with such an interpretation: Scripture does not present the prospect of serving as a disciple of the Lord as something which oozes with attraction. Jesus paints a stark and realistic picture of the life of any one of his followers: “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him disregard himself and pick up *his*

¹³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), p. 359. Richard C. Trench states: “...in the East, on account of the frequent changes of dynasties, and the revolutions which accompany them, many rich men divide their goods into three parts: one they employ in commerce, or for their necessary support; one they turn into jewels, which, should it prove needful to fly, could easily be carried with them; a third part they bury And thus, when we read in Eastern tales, how a man has found a buried treasure, and in a moment, risen from poverty to great riches, this is, in fact, no strange or rare occurrence, but a natural consequence of the customs of these people.” (*Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* [London: Pickering and Inglis, Ltd., 1953], pp. 127-128.)

¹⁴ Mark L. Bailey, “The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl Merchant,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 156, no. 622, April 1999, p. 177.

¹⁵ Lenski, pp. 542-543.

¹⁶ Bailey, p. 179.

¹⁷ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), p. 201.

cross and follow me”(Mt 16:24; emphasis added). The very association of σταυρός with the concept of discipleship would have been enough to make any first-century prospective follower step back and ruminate.¹⁸

However, these difficulties are put to rest by returning to the proper *tertium* of the parable. If the hidden/found treasure is understood to represent the Gospel, the essence of the saving activity of God, a person would indeed be joyful when he finds it. Just as the shepherds mentioned above heard the good news of the angel and reacted with joy, so also the man who is confronted with the best news of all: eternal salvation given by God.

The traditional interpretation of this parable has been common since the early centuries in the New Testament church. Origen, while over-interpreting many of the parable’s details, writes:

Now a man who comes to the field, whether to the Scriptures or to the Christ who is formed both from things manifest and from things hidden, finds the hidden treasure of wisdom whether in Christ or in the Scriptures. For, going round to visit the field and searching the Scriptures and seeking to understand the Christ, he finds the treasure in it. Having found it, he hides it, thinking that it is not without danger to reveal to everybody the secret meanings of the Scriptures or the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. And, having hidden it, he goes away. Now he is focused in the heavy labor of devising how he shall buy the field, or the Scriptures, that he may make them his own possession, receiving from the people of God the oracles of God with which the Jews were first entrusted. But when one taught by Christ has bought the field, the kingdom of God, according to another parable, is like a vineyard that is “taken from” the first and given to other nations bringing forth its fruits. The one who bought the field in faith, as the fruit of his having sold all else that he had, no longer was keeping anything that was formerly his. For they would be a distracting source of evil to him.

And you will give the same application, if the field containing the hidden treasure is Christ. Those who give up all things and follow him have, as it were in another way, sold their possessions. Thus by having sold and surrendered them and having received in their place a noble resolution from God their helper, they may purchase, at great cost worthy of the field, the field containing the hidden treasure.¹⁹

Again, some argue that God/Christ is the *ἄνθρωπος* in this parable.²⁰ According to such an interpretation, what is the treasure, the precious commodity for which he is willing to sacrifice all? The treasure in this parable is the world, i.e., all mankind. This interpretation corresponds nicely with the treasure being located in the field, which, in the previous Matthew 13 parables, was definitely representative of the world. God’s love for the entire world is one of the central themes of Scripture. From the first promise of a Savior (Ge 3:15) to Jesus’ *τετέλεσται* (Jn 19:30) on the cross to God extending the time of grace for all mankind (especially believers - 2 Pe 2:9), God demonstrates that he considers the world to be of great value.

According to this alternate interpretation, the prepositional phrase modifying God’s subsequent actions, *ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ*, elucidates again his love for mankind. God does not take any pleasure in the destruction of

¹⁸ Cicero: “A wretched thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; wretched to suffer a fine, wretched to suffer exile. Yet in every disaster like this, some vestige of freedom is left behind. Finally, even if we have death set before us, we may die as free men. But the executioner, the covering of the head, and the very word ‘cross’ should be removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but also from their thoughts, their eyes, their ears!” (*Pro Rabirio*, 9-17)

¹⁹ *Commentary on Matthew* 10.6, Simonetti, pp. 285-286.

²⁰ Craig A. Evans in “Parables in Early Judaism” (Longenecker, p. 67) notes, “There are some 325 extant Tannaitic [roughly the first two centuries of Christianity] parables, more than half of which feature a king, who almost always represents God.” In addition, the parables as a whole in Matthew tend to depict God as the actor, moreso than Mark and Luke (see appendices).

unbelievers (Eze 33:11). Part of his disposition toward mankind is that of grace.²¹ In spite of man's fallen nature, God is a true *philanthropist*:

Titus 3:4: "But after that the kindness and love (ἡ φιλανθρωπία) of God, our Savior, toward man appeared." Luther remarks on this passage: "This φιλανθρωπία, love of mankind, embraces all that is called man, no matter how lowly he is. For God loves not the person, but the nature (und heist nicht *personselig*, sondern *leutselig*) Such a disposition the Apostle attributes here to our God." (St. L. XII: 129 f.).²²

God's love of mankind is a choice he makes. Inherent in the definition of χάρις is the notion that such is undeserved. God's grace emanates from him toward man at his own discretion. Scripture makes it clear what God's discretion is: he "wills [desires] all men to be saved" (1 Ti 2:4). Thus it brings God much pleasure, much joy, to view mankind as a valuable entity.

One final consideration from the standpoint of viewing God as the "man" in this parable would be to compare this parable to the expression of God's love for fallen mankind ("For God loved the world in this way, that he gave his one and only son..." [Jn 3:16]). This verse not only illustrates the fact of God's love (his joy in "finding" the treasure), it also sheds light on the next portion of this parable: what God did as a result of his joy. The parable concludes that God "goes and sells all whatever he has and buys that field." This phrase makes clear what God was willing to sacrifice in order to obtain the field; namely, everything. Paul states, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32; ESV) No cost was too great for God to pay, since the salvation of the entire world was at stake.

Again, such an interpretation stretches too far past the true *tertium* of the parable and injects elements not present. While such an interpretation has some merit in view of the entirety of Scripture, it is not substantiated within this parable itself. The summary of the primary point of this parable of the treasure: when someone "discovers" the precious treasure of God's saving activity, that is, when he hears the great news of God's rescue of fallen mankind (including he himself!), he recognizes that this news is far too valuable to let slip away. He pours all he has and is into securing and retaining that treasure, giving up everything for the sake of gaining an eternity in heaven.

Do any of Christ's offices come to the fore in this parable? If interpreted with God as the "man," one might see Christ's office of Priest standing in the foreground, since he gave himself as a sacrifice to save man. Interpreting this parable according to the more traditional view, it still might be acceptable to see this office of Christ in this regard: the essence of the treasure is inextricably tied to the saving work of Christ, including his sacrificial death. He is the sacrifice and the Sacrificer, the victim and the priest (Heb 7:26-27; Heb 9:26-28; CW 309:1). His sacrifice was all-sufficient: sufficient for all sins of each individual, sufficient for the sins of the entirety of mankind (Ro 6:10; He 7:27; 10:10).

The Parable of the Pearl - Matthew 13:45-46

Text

45 Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ ἐμπόρῳ ζητοῦντι καλοὺς μαργαρίτας· **46** εὐρὼν δὲ ἓνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην ἀπελθὼν πέπρακεν πάντα ὅσα εἶχεν καὶ ἠγόρασεν αὐτόν.

²¹ Francis Pieper: "In the salutation of the Pastoral Epistles: 'Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord' (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2), grace is placed beside mercy and thus characterized as a disposition in God. In the shorter salutation of the Pauline Epistles: 'Grace be unto you and peace' (1 Cor. 1:3; Rom 1:7, etc.), χάρις has the same meaning . . . Χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη), placed side by side, denote objective conditions in God, present before there is any faith in man; faith does not produce these conditions, but accepts them." (p. 7, fn 11)

²² Pieper, pp. 8-9, fn 14.

Translation

(45) “Again, of the same nature/like is the Kingdom of Heaven to a man, a merchant, seeking excellent/beautiful pearls; (46) and after finding one very valuable pearl after going away he sold all whatever he had and bought it.”

Analysis

Key vocabulary

(45) ἐμπόρω - noun dat. m sg.; in Classical Greek, *one who boards a ship as a passenger, then one who travels by ship for business reasons, merchant* (BDAG 325); *wholesale dealer*. The dative is for the comparison (following ὁμοία).

μαργαρίτας - noun acc. m pl.; *pearls* (as a very valuable gem).

Pearls were highly prized throughout the whole period of antiquity. They were fished for especially in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, by divers, and used for adornment, especially as necklaces. We hear of pearls worth millions. Caesar presented the mother of his subsequent murderer Brutus with a pearl worth 6 million sesterces Cleopatra is said to have possessed a pearl worth 100 million sesterces...²³

(46) πολύτιμον - adj. acc. m. sg. (modifies μαργαρίτην); lit., “much honor;” pertaining to being very high on a monetary scale (BDAG 850), *of great price, very valuable, costly*.

πέπρακεν - pf. act. ind. 3 sg. fr. πιπράσκω; engaged in vending, (*has*) sold.

Syntax

(45) The absence of the article with μαργαρίτας points to the quality of their value.

(46) The perfect πέπρακεν has the aspect of the aorist here, heightening the vivid nature of the action. Robertson (p. 900) refers to it as the historical perfect; Wallace (p. 578) as the aoristic perfect. This use of the perfect shows no concern for continuing results.

Interpretation

Obviously this parable is meant to convey the same message as the parable of the treasure. Not only does it immediately follow the parable of the treasure, Jesus also introduces it with πάλιν.

Again, this parable has traditionally been interpreted in a similar fashion to that of the treasure. One difference between this parable and the previous is that the man in this parable was actively engaged in trying to find an object of great value.

Now among the words of all kinds that profess to announce truth, and among those who report them, he seeks pearls. Think of the prophets as, so to speak, the pearls that receive the dew of heaven and become pregnant with the word of truth from heaven. They are goodly pearls that, according to the phrase here set forth, the merchant seeks. And the chief of the pearls, on the finding of which the rest are found with it, is the very costly pearl, the Christ of God, the Word that is superior to the precious letters and thoughts in the law and the prophets. When one finds this pearl all the rest are easily released.²⁴

It is interesting to note that this parable is included in the Gospel of Thomas:

²³ Jeremias, p. 199. Four sestertii were equivalent to one denarius.

²⁴ Origen, *Commentary on Matthew 10:8*, Simonetti, p. 287.

Jesus said: The kingdom of the Father is like a merchant who had a load (of goods) and found a pearl. That merchant was wise. He sold the load and bought for himself the pearl alone. You also, seek after his treasure which does not fail (but) endures, where moth does not come near to devour nor worm to destroy.²⁵

This is the only other “source” of this parable, since it does not appear in any of the other canonical Gospels.²⁶ Note how the Gospel of Thomas records Jesus’ own application of the parable, a definite allusion to Matthew 6:19-20.²⁷ It is interesting to note that in Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” Matthew does not record any such parable in the context of encouraging his followers to “store up treasures” for themselves. The Gospel of Thomas’ rendition of this parable is interpretive.

All that was stated above concerning the interpretation of the parable of the treasure need not be repeated *in toto*. The very valuable pearl is the kingdom of God, God’s saving activity as shown in Christ. The “man, a merchant,” is the one who discovers the pearl and subsequently gives his all to obtain it.²⁸ Jesus used this parable to express the same point as he made with the parable of the treasure. He simply wanted his listeners to view his teaching from another perspective.

The primary point of this parable: one who needs rescue is overjoyed in finding it in the “pearl” of God’s saving activity. (See the explanation of the parable of the treasure for additional details.)

The Parable of the Dragnet - Matthew 13:47-50

Text

47 Πάλιν ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν σαγήνη βληθείση εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ ἐκ παντὸς γένους συναγαγούση· 48 ἣν ὅτε ἐπληρώθη ἀναβιβάσαντες ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν καὶ καθίσαντες συνέλεξαν τὰ καλὰ εἰς ἄγγη, τὰ δὲ σαπρὰ ἔξω ἔβαλον. 49 οὕτως ἔσται ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος· ἐξελεύσονται οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀφοριοῦσιν τοὺς πονηροὺς ἐκ μέσου τῶν δικαίων 50 καὶ βαλοῦσιν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

Translation

(47) “Again, of the same nature/like is the Kingdom of Heaven to a dragnet having been cast into the sea and having gathered in out of every kind; (48) which, when it was filled, after having pulled [it] up on the seashore and after having sat down, they gathered (in) the beautiful ones into baskets, but the unusable ones [because they were decaying] they threw outside. (49) In this way it shall be in the (sphere of) completion of the age; the angels will go out and will separate the evil ones from the midst of/from among the righteous ones (50) and will throw them into the fiery furnace; in that place there will be crying and gnashing of teeth.”

²⁵ Gospel of Thomas 76, <http://www.gospelthomas.com/gospelthomas76.html>.

²⁶ Jeremias who believes “the Gospel of Thomas has the original: ‘he sold the merchandise’ . . . Matthew has heightened the meaning under the influence of 13.44” (p. 200).

²⁷ [Jesus said:] “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust ruin and where thieves break through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust ruin and where thieves do not break through and steal.”

²⁸ Hagner: “There is deliberate hyperbole in verse 46, for it is rather unlikely that any merchant would sell everything that he or she had in order to acquire any single pearl!” (p. 117).

Analysis

Key vocabulary

- (47) *σαγήνη* - noun dat. f. sg.; a large net hanging vertically, with floats at the top and sinkers on the bottom (BDAG 910), *seine, dragnet*.
γένους - noun gen. n. sg.; here, *kind, class*.
- (48) *ἐπληρώθη* - aor. pass. ind. 3 sg. fr. *πληρόω*; *it was filled (up) completely, was filled with, became full*.
ἀναβιβάσαντες - aor. act. ptc. nom. m. pl. fr. *ἀναβιάζω*; *after having drawn, pulled up, brought up* (as of a net being brought to shore); this is the causal of *ἀναβίζω*, I cause to come/go up, ascend.
αἰγιαλόν - noun acc. m. sg.; *seashore, beach*.
συνέλεξαν - aor. act. ind. 3 pl. fr. *συλλέγω*; to gather by picking or plucking (BDAG 956), *gathered (in), collected*.
ἄγγη - noun acc. n. pl.; a container primarily for liquids or wet objects (BDAG 9), *vessels, containers; (woven) baskets*.
σαπρὰ - pron. acc. n. pl.; of such poor quality as to be of little or no value (BDAG 913), *bad; lit., decaying, rotting, rotten; of decaying fish or fruit no longer useful for food*.
- (49) *συντελεία* - noun dat. f. sg.; as the point of time marking the close of an age or a duration, *end, conclusion, completion*.
ἀφοριοῦσιν - fut. act. ind. 3 pl. fr. *ἀφορίζω*; strictly, *will mark off by boundaries; thus, will separate, take away*.
- (50) *κάμινον* - noun acc. m. sg.; lit., *oven, furnace, kiln*.
κλαυθμός - noun nom. m. sg.; *weeping, crying, lamentation; with the article describes the unique and extreme character of the weeping* (BDAG 546).
βρυγμός - noun nom. m. sg.; *gnashing, grinding, grating*. The grinding (or chattering) of the teeth was because of pain or cold (BDAG 184).

Syntax

- (47) The absence of the article with *σαγήνη* may emphasize the comprehensive nature of this dragnet.
The absence of the article with *γένους* may emphasize the diversity of those gathered, or the completeness of the totality of those gathered.
The aorist participles *βληθώσι* and *συναγαούσι* both are used attributively to *σαγήνη*, pointing out key characteristics of this net.
- (48) The agent behind the passive of *ἐπληρώθη* is best understood as God (or his agents, the angels).
- (49) The genitive of *τοῦ αἰῶνος* is objective.
- (50) The genitive of *τοῦ πυρός* is descriptive; thus, the fiery furnace.
The genitive of *τῶν ὀδόντων* is objective.

Interpretation

This parable serves as a fitting conclusion of the Kingdom parables in Matthew 13, bringing the reader back to the primary points of the parable of the weeds in the wheat and emphasizing the finality of God's gracious action in Christ.

The parallels between this parable and the parable of the weeds in the wheat are obvious. Jesus does not speak directly here about the necessity of waiting for his time (*καιρός*) to separate the evil from the righteous. Instead he indicates in somewhat of an oblique manner that the final “harvest” occurs when the *σαγήνη* thrown by the angels into the sea of the world in order to gather all people (*ἐκ παντὸς γένους*) for judgment/separation becomes full (v 48). The net has been interpreted as the gospel,²⁹ or as the church:

Again the kingdom of heaven is said to be like a fishing net that is let down into the sea, gathering all kinds of fish. Once it is filled, the net is brought to shore. The good fish are gathered into baskets, but the bad ones are thrown away. Our holy church is compared to a net, because it has been entrusted to fishermen, and because all people are drawn up in it from the turbulent waters of the present age to the eternal kingdom, lest we drown in the depths of eternal death. This net gathers all kinds of fish because it calls to forgiveness of sins everyone, wise and foolish, free and slave, rich and poor, brave and weak. Hence, the psalmist says to God: “Unto you shall all flesh come.” This net will be completely filled when it enfolds the entire number of the human race at the end of time. The fishermen bring it in and sit down on the shore, because just as the sea signifies this present age, so the shore signifies its end.³⁰

It is best not to apply a specific definition to the *σαγήνη* here. Rather, it would be better understood as referring to the completion of God’s time of grace. Throughout time the net is being filled, as people either come into it as believers or non-believers.

The “righteous” (v 43) are here described as *τὰ καλά* (v 48), indicating their beauty in the eyes of God. They are placed into containers, meaning that they will be preserved for the purpose intended by God (a permanent home in heaven). The “ones doing lawlessness” (v 41) are referred to as rotting, decaying fish (v 48), sufficiently describing their putrid nature in God’s nostrils.³¹ Of necessity these must be removed from God’s presence - they are thrown outside (v 48), and then into *τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός* (v 50) for final and eternal suffering.

The primary point of this parable is not difficult to determine since Jesus himself interprets it in vss. 49-50. At the end of the world, God’s agents will come and separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous will be saved and the unrighteous will be punished, seemingly for a long time. It is possible to see in this parable Jesus’ office of King. But given the *tertium*, that God is going to gather everyone together in order to separate them into two groups, it is not vital to the parable to emphasize the kingly office of Jesus.

Conclusion

Christ Jesus is the center of all Scripture in a general sense. “For this much is beyond question, that all the Scriptures point to Christ alone. Indeed in John 5[:46] Christ says, ‘Moses wrote of me.’”³² Is he also the center of the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13? Scaer argues that such Christocentricity in these kingdom parables is consistent with how Jesus presents himself in his other parables.

²⁹ Lenski, p. 547.

³⁰ Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies* 11.4, Simonetti, p. 288. Cf. also Kingsbury: “...the net becomes a picture for the Church, and the Church factually becomes the empirical representative of God’s kingly rule on earth” (p. 120).

³¹ Jeremias views them a little differently: “Τὰ σαπρὰ are (a) unclean fish (Lev. 11.10 f.: all fish without scales such as the *barbut* (*clarias macracanthus*), which has almost the appearance of a snake ...and all fish without fins; and (b) non-edible marine creatures, such as crabs, which were regarded as worthless” (p. 226).

³² Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 132.

True, he did preach about God, but this view overlooks the fact that Jesus made Himself the object of His own preaching, especially in His parables. He describes Himself as the sower of the good seed in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13:24-30, 37) and by clear inference He is the subject of the parable of the sower and of other parables. He is the only son of the vineyard owner (Mt 21:23-33; cf. Mk 12:6; and Lk 10:22), and the son for whom the king gives a wedding feast (Mt 22:1-10). The references to Himself and His hearers were so clear in His parable preaching that they knew Jesus was claiming to be God's Son (Mt 21:45, 27:63). The charge of blasphemy against Jesus was not without foundation as He was correctly putting Himself on the same level as God (Jn 5:18). Others may have made similar claims for themselves in regard to messiahship, but Jesus had demonstrated through his teachings, life, and miracles that such claims were not without foundation. Jesus' messianic claims for Himself also included a claim to deity.³³

Does Jesus present himself as the central focus of the kingdom parables of Matthew 13? Jesus establishes the primary thrust of this chapter in the parable of the soils. The subsequent parables Jesus uses to elaborate on that primary thrust, focusing on God's/his love and care for his followers. The following summary of the chapter (through v 53) depicts Matthew 13 in a thematic fashion, emphasizing what Jesus is teaching about himself to his disciples and how it affects their discipleship:

A major truth of Matthew 13 (as depicted in the parable of the soils): Some people will reject the kingdom of heaven, others will receive it (13:3-9, 18-23).

Now, for those of you who receive the Kingdom of heaven, here's how God/Jesus will keep you in the good soil:

- Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat (13:24-30; 36-43): You have to co-exist with unbelievers. But in the end, Jesus will glorify you.
- Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast (13:31-32, 33): While you're co-existing, keep in mind that Jesus is powerful.
- Parables of the Treasure and the Pearl (13:44, 45-46): While you're co-existing, keep in mind that you have an incredible treasure in your possession.
- Parable of the Dragnet (13:47-50): You have to co-exist with unbelievers. But in the end, Jesus will glorify you.

Thus in these parables Jesus paints a picture of life within his kingdom, not focusing *per se* on himself to the exclusion of other foci. Understanding God's kingdom as an activity and not a static entity, Jesus weaves through these parables a mix of his/God's work in behalf of man (e.g., weeds/wheat, dragnet) and also man's activity within the kingdom (e.g., treasure/pearl). While these parables at least make allusions to Jesus' threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, these are not the primary focus. The primary focus simply appears to be Jesus' description of various ways in which the triune God works in our behalf.

Soli deo gloria

³³ Scaer, pp. 47-48.

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