

7 Seeing the kingdom (Matthew 13–14)

What Jesus **said** and what Jesus **did** are sandwiched as layers in Matthew:

- He addressed his people (5–7), and then carried their sufferings (8–9).
- He commissioned his servants (10), and then demonstrated his authority (11–12).
- He told stories of the kingdom (13), and then embodied kingdom leadership (14).

But why tell stories instead of a robustly argued theology? Every culture has stories. Every family has stories. The stories tell us who we are, the family we belong to.

Jesus' stories help us find our place in Father's family. His parables are snapshots of a culture shaped by God's governance and care, parables of the kingdom.

"The kingdom of heaven is like this," he says. And it's transformative! We hear where we belong. We see ourselves as what we were designed to be, community under divine management. In him we become the kingdom that heaven always intended the earth to be. If we have ears to hear and eyes to see, this is home. It's why we're alive.

7.1 What his kingdom is like (Matthew 13)

A sower went out to sow (13:1-9, 18-23)

You've heard the parable of the sower? What's it about? There's four kinds of soil, so I need to be the good soil? That assumes it's about me. A better question might be, "Who is the sower?"

Matthew 13:1-9 (my translation)

¹ That same day, Jesus left the house and sat down beside the lake.

² Large crowds assembled around him, so he climbed into a boat and took a seat while all the crowd stood on the shore. ³ He told them many things in parables.

"See, **the sower went out to sow**. ⁴ As he sowed, some seeds fell on the path and the birds came and ate them.

⁵ "Other seeds fell on stony ground where there wasn't much soil. It came up quickly through the shallow soil. ⁶ But when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it couldn't take root it withered.

⁷ "Other seeds fell among the thorns, and the thorns took over and choked them out.

⁸ "Other seeds fell on good soil and produced a harvest. Some yielded one hundred seeds, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ If you have ears, hear it."

Every storyteller struggles to find the balance between being cryptic and being "preachy." The worst example I've seen was a movie about a trash-collecting robot named Wall-E. By the end of the movie the environmental message was so in-your-face that I was feeling, "Get me out of here!" even though I'm passionate about our responsibility to look after the world God created. At the other extreme, some movies bury the message so cryptically that most people don't get it.



WALL-E (Pixar, 2008)

Preachers today tend to err on the side of being obvious rather than cryptic, treating us as children who won't be able to figure it out. Jesus took the opposite approach, leaving the story unexplained, like a splinter in the mind.

Even his disciples didn't get it. When they asked, Jesus offered this explanation:

Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸ “So, listen to the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message of the kingdom and doesn't get it, the evil one takes away what had been sown in their heart. That's the one sown on the path.

²⁰ “The one sown on the stony ground, this is someone who hears the message and instantly receives it with joy ²¹ but without any root to draw on it doesn't last. When pressing or harassing times come as a result of the message, it falters straightaway.

²² “The one sown into the thorns, this is someone who hears the message, and the worries of the present era and enticement of wealth crowd out the message and it becomes fruitless.

²³ “The one sown on the good soil, this is someone who hears the message and gets it, actually bearing fruit—some a hundred seeds, some sixty, some thirty.”

Jesus didn't call it the parable of the **soils**. He called it *the parable of the sower* (verse 18). Who was *the sower*? Who was delivering *the message of the kingdom* (verse 19)?

A later parable makes it more obvious: *The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man*. And where is he sowing? *The field is the world* (verses 37-38).

The earth is God's farm. He created it. He blessed it with fruitfulness. He placed us here to tend and protect it. But we all know that the earth is not as productive as God decreed it to be. There are thorns and thistles competing with the word God spoke for us. There are shallow places where God's intentions cannot take root. There are rocky places where what God said bounces off and nothing grows.

Is it hopeless? Is there any point in persisting with this frustrating world where *thorns and thistles* overtake what we plant, where we eat *by the sweat of our brow* before we *fall back into the soil from which we were taken*? (Genesis 3:18-19)

“Yes, there is a point!” says Jesus. That's why *the sower went out to sow* (verse 3). He knows the earth is unresponsive, but he believes God will still have his harvest.

Many seeds produce nothing. Some die on the rocks. Some don't have the depth to survive. Some are choked by thorns. But **some** grow: the earth will yield its harvest.

The son of man was fulfilling what God called humans to do in the beginning: tending God's creation, **replanting the earth** to yield what God intended when he said, “*Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants ... that bear fruit*” (Genesis 1:11).



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Triticum_spelta_ears_spelt_aar_%282%29.jpg

God's decrees for the earth are not *bouncing back from an empty void*; they will *accomplish what he intends* (Isaiah 55:10-13). The sower is replanting heaven's reign in the earth. That's what his seeds are: the *message of the kingdom* (verse 19).

And if we're to have ears of grain to harvest, the seeds need to sink into our ears now.

Why parables instead of plain-speaking? (13:10-17)

Earth has a long history of not being responsive to God. The example Jesus gives comes from Isaiah 6, where God was calling Isaiah to prophetic ministry.

Matthew 13:10-17

¹⁰ His followers approached and asked him, "Why are you speaking to them in parables?"

¹¹ He answered them, "To you has been given secret information on the kingdom of heaven, not released to the public. ¹² The one who gets this will be given a great deal more; the one who doesn't get it, will have it removed from them.

¹³ "This is the reason I speak to them in parables: 'Seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear or understand.'

¹⁴ "Fulfilled in them is what the prophet Isaiah described:

'In hearing, you will hear and never understand,
and in seeing you will see and never perceive.

¹⁵ Obstructed was the heart of this people;
they heard with blocked ears.

Their eyes they closed, so there was no way they could see
with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with
their heart and turn back and I would heal them.' [Isaiah 6:9-10]

¹⁶ "But your eyes are blessed so they see, and your ears so they hear.

¹⁷ "Truly I tell you that many prophets and upright people yearned to see what you see and didn't see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it."

The quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10 presumes we know the context is the call of Isaiah:

- **Isaiah 6:1-4:** God reveals his reign, the majestic throne in heaven. It's a temple setting since the ark in the most holy place represented God's throne on earth.
- **6:5-8:** The revelation of God's authority makes Isaiah aware of how unresponsive he and his people are earth. God restores relationship with Isaiah, so his lips can deliver God's message.
- **6:9-11:** God warns him how hard it will be to get through to God's recalcitrant nation. He asks how long this frustrating calling will take.
- **6:12-13:** God tells him not to quit until the kingdom lies in ruins. God's nation will be felled like a tree, but it isn't the end: *the holy seed will be in the stump in the earth.*

Even when God's nation fell to Babylon, God never gave up on his wayward people. The Davidic kingship was felled, but Isaiah said the *stump* would sprout a *Branch* that

would *bear fruit*. He was talking about the son of David, anointed by *the Spirit of the LORD* to restore his people (Isaiah 11:1-2). And here he was: the Branch from David's dynasty had come.

Jesus faced the same frustration as the prophets of old, but instead of berating his people he inspired their imagination with stories. He can open up to the twelve about his frustration, but to the crowds he paints cameos of the kingdom. The parables are little insights that lift the curtain on one aspect of their hope of restoration into God's reign, opening their ears to hear the shepherd's voice.

Thought question: How can we do that? How do we proclaim the gospel not as condemnation of people's failures but as Jesus did: inspiring people with visions of the productive communal life God intends?

What about the weeds? (13:24-30, 36-43)

Here's another parable that paints the world as God's farm:

Matthew 13:24-30

²⁴ He set out another parable for them. "Heaven's kingdom is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ While the people were asleep, an enemy sowed weeds between the wheat, and left. ²⁶ When the plants germinated and came to head, the weeds showed up as well.

²⁷ The householder's servants came and asked, 'Master, didn't you sow good seed in your field? How come there are weeds?'

²⁸ "He responded, 'An enemy has done this!'

"So his servants say, 'Do you want us to head out and collect them?'

²⁹ "The owner says, 'No way! Don't collect the weeds! You might pull out some of the wheat too! ³⁰ Let both grow together until harvest.

At harvest time I'll tell the harvesters to collect the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burnt, and to gather the wheat into my barn.'"

In Jesus' stories, God is the owner, the householder, the vinedresser, the olive orchid cultivator. It's God's farm, and his people work it for him (Leviticus 25:23).

Verse 26 is hilarious. I've never met a farmer who explained why there are weeds on his farm by saying, "Well, an enemy came and planted them while we were sleeping!"

But Jesus has a point. We're so used to weeding that we don't stop to consider how thorns and thistles were not part of God's plans for the earth. The weeds are the fruit of an enemy planting seeds of rebellion in his Garden (Genesis 3:1-5).

The servants assume they should weed the farm. That's normal: the weeds make it hard for the crop to survive. No one who wants to maximize their income leaves the weeds in the crop. So, why on earth would the owner say to leave the weeds there?

The owner has a different value system. God prefers to leave all the plants in his field rather than take the chance that his servants might mistakenly uproot a tender plant because they think it's a weed. That's radical!

God's servants in Judaism—and in Christianity—imagine our job is to point out where people are failing God, to uproot the ungodly for the sake of the community. The

parable denies us the role of judges. We don't know who are weeds and who are wheat, who are saved and who are lost, who are righteous and who are sinners.

Jesus demands we leave it to God to sort out when he's ready. God is more than capable of—and willing to—sort it out in his time. We are not the harvesters. We must leave the sorting out to God so we don't tear out any tender plants.

Here's Jesus' explanation:

Matthew 13: 36-43

³⁶ After dismissing the crowds, he went indoors. His followers approached him saying, "Clarify the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ He replied, "The sower of the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of evil. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed among them is the devil. The harvest is when the era has reached fulfilment. The harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ "It is then that the weeds are collected and burnt in the fire, only when the era has reached fulfilment. ⁴¹ The son of man will commission his angels and they will collect out of his kingdom everything that trips people up and those who act in rebellion. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, the place of lamenting and grinding teeth. ⁴³ Then those who lived right will blaze like the sun in their Father's kingdom. If you have ears, hear!"

Jesus has authority on God's farm. But he is not pulling out the weeds. He's leaving us all to grow together. He's setting the example. We have no role pulling each other out.

How the kingdom grows (13:31-35)

If you were buying seeds at the market and one **mustard seed** fell from your basket, you wouldn't worry about it. One mustard seed isn't worth worrying about.

But take that mustard seed home, plant it in your garden, and you'll have a shrub that takes up significant space in your herb bed. In time, it can grow to a metre or two tall.

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like that. Compared to the rulers of his time, Jesus was not worth worrying about. If you'd asked anyone in first-century Europe, "Who holds the greater power: Tiberius Caesar or Jesus of Nazareth?" their response would be, "Jesus who?"

But the kingdom of God is not like the kingdoms of the world where the rulers are mortal. God reigns on a different timespan (Psalm 90:3-4). Their life is like grass—flourishing today and gone tomorrow—but *the LORD has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all* (Psalm 103:15, 19). That's why God says, *Do not put your trust in princes ... when their spirit departs, they return to the ground, while the LORD reigns forever* (Psalm 145:3, 10).

While others work to build their own kingdoms, Jesus trusts the natural growth process that God decreed for his world:

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person sowed in their field. ³² It’s the smallest of all the seeds, but when it grows it’s the biggest herb. And it becomes a tree so the birds of the heavens can live in its branches.”

Once again, there’s a twist in the story. Mustard seeds do not grow into trees. We’re in “Jack and the Beanstalk” territory here. What is this strange development?

One night King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of his own greatness. He said:

Daniel 4:10-12 (NIV)

¹⁰ “I looked, and there before me stood a tree ... ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky ... ¹² Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches.”

But Nebuchadnezzar did not really use his power to benefit all the creatures. It was all about his grandiose self, *touching the sky* like the tower of Babel. As the dream unfolds, he hears that God will take his power from him, freeing those he’d captured:

Daniel 4:10–14 (NIV)

¹³ “In the visions ... there before me was ... a messenger, coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree ... Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.’”

God promised to take the kingdom from the beasts and given to *one like a son of man* (Daniel 7). The little mustard seed would become the tree that fills the earth and liberates all the creatures of God’s world into his governance.

But the kingdom takes time to grow, in God’s good time. It’s here, because the king is here. It’s not fully here, because not everyone recognizes God’s anointed ruler. The miraculous growth of God’s kingdom is still in process. The tree is still growing to fill the world.

The parable of the **leaven** makes a similar point. It only takes a little leaven to make sourdough. You can’t even see it once you’ve worked it into the flour. The rising of the kingdom of God is like that leaven: it looked so insignificant at the start.

Again, there’s an unexpected twist: the amount of bread.

Matthew 13:33-35

³³ Another parable he told them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three buckets of flour—until the whole lot fermented!”

³⁴ Jesus told the crowds everything in parables; he told them nothing except through parables, ³⁵ so the word spoken through the prophet could be fulfilled, “I will open my mouth in parables. I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.” [Psalm 78:2]

Three containers of flour, 8 or 9 kilograms each? When it rises, she’ll have enough to feed her whole village! As insignificant as the kingdom looked in Jesus’ time, it’s rising for the whole community.

Discovering the kingdom (13:44-50)

In a world where people value their own power, influence, pleasure, wealth, and recognition, living for God's reign is not of obvious value:

Matthew 13:44

"The kingdom is like treasure hidden in the field, and when it was discovered the person hid it, and in his joy he heads off and sells everything he has and buys that field."

Once you discover what it's like to live for others, it's such a joyful discovery that you're glad to be free of everything else you valued (Philippians 3:8). Nothing else matters when we discover the joy of loving God and loving people, the joy of communal life in God's care (the kingdom of God).

Matthew 13:45-46

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a trader seeking quality pearls.

⁴⁶ Finding one priceless pearl, he went and sold off everything he had, and bought it."

A pearl aficionado can talk for hours about the value of these little treasures: their size and shape and colour, their surface lustre and translucency. Most pearls today are cultured, but finding the perfect natural pearl would be the discovery of a lifetime.

I wouldn't mortgage my house for a pearl, but there are people who would. I guess it depends what we value.

Some people love fishing. Some of Jesus' disciples could relate to this one:

Matthew 13:47-50

⁴⁷ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea, and pulled in all sorts. ⁴⁸ When it was full, it was drawn up onto the shore. They sat down and collected the good ones into baskets, but the worthless ones they threw away.

⁴⁹ "That's how it will be when the era reaches fulfilment. The angels will go out and separate the evil ones from among the right ones. ⁵⁰ They'll toss them in the fiery furnace, the place of lamenting and grinding teeth."

Many of us want God to sort out the injustice now. We're disappointed with God when he doesn't. We feel like jumping into the water to sort the fish while the net is still in the water. It's what the Pharisees were doing.

So how do we go about this fishing business that Jesus gave his disciples if we aren't permitted to sort the good fish from the bad? How do we communicate the good news of Christ's kingdom if we don't have the authority to say who's in and who's out?



Responding to the kingdom stories (13:51-58)

At the start of this chapter, the disciples were struggling to understand. Jesus checks how they're doing now:

Matthew 13:51-52 (paraphrased)

"Do you understand all these stories?" Jesus asked.

"Yes, we get it!" they replied.

"That's good, because you're now scholars, trained kingdom agents.

You know how a small business owner sets out his valuables, blending the latest styles and antiques in a compelling presentation? Well, that's you. That's what I've trained you to do."

How are you doing? Do you have a greater appreciation of life under God's management as a result of the cameos Jesus painted?

Did you notice how Jesus connects kingdom life under his management with kingdom life in Old Testament times? He wasn't tossing away everything the Jewish people had lived and suffered. He was incorporating the best expressions of life with God from the old kingdom, along with the new.

But for many of his contemporaries, the "new" was difficult. The kingdom of God would be a different kind of nation, incorporating people from all over the earth into the reign of God's anointed. It would function as a different kind of temple, God living in the entire community by his Spirit rather than in one location in Jerusalem.

His parables intentionally connected with the familiar aspects of Israel's experience as God's kingdom in Old Testament times. The parables also introduce the new dimension of being God's global people in Christ.

He expects us to take the same approach. We're to find the common ground with people (what they already know of God) and introduce the dimension of life in Christ. His storytelling empowers us to tell the stories of what the reign of God is like too.

So how well did Jesus' approach work? Did he manage to inspire people with these stories that shone a light on specific aspects of life on earth under heaven's reign?

Matthew 13:53-58 (interpretative translation)

⁵³ When Jesus had concluded these wisdom stories, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴ He came to his hometown, and started instructing them in their synagogue, much to their astonishment.

They asked, "From where did he get this insight and forcefulness?

⁵⁵ Isn't this the builder's son? Doesn't he belong to the one called Mary, along with his brothers—James and Joseph and Simon and Jude?

⁵⁶ Don't his sisters know their place among us? Where did he get all this from?" ⁵⁷ They were offended at him.

Jesus told them, "A prophet isn't shamed, except at home, in his own household." ⁵⁸ He didn't do many powerful acts there, because of their mistrust.

I guess he meant what he said. The sower went out to sow, but the crop didn't grow overnight. Not everyone has ears.

7.2 What his kingdom is not like (Matthew 14)

Jesus' stories told us what the kingdom of heaven is like. But presenting Jesus as a king can frighten people. We've all experienced power being abused.

So how do we announce a king who cares for his people? To highlight the difference Matthew juxtaposes the stories of two kings.

A tale of two kings (14:1-14)

Matthew 14:1-14

¹ Around that time, Herod, (ruler of one of the four regions) heard about Jesus. ² He said to his servants, "This is John the Baptizer, back from the dead! That's why these powers are at work in him."

³ For Herod had arrested John and locked him away under guard because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. ⁴ John had been saying to Herod, "It's illegal for you to have her." ⁵ Herod wanted to kill him, but feared the crowd that held John to be a prophet.

⁶ Herod's birthday arrived, and Herodias' daughter danced in front of everyone, delighting Herod. ⁷ With an oath, he promised to give her whatever she asked for. ⁸ Impelled by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a serving dish, the head of John the Baptizer."

⁹ The king was distressed, but because he'd given his oath in front of his guests, he issued the command ¹⁰ and decapitated the imprisoned John.

¹¹ His head was presented on a serving dish and given to the girl who presented it to her mother. ¹² John's followers came and collected his corpse and buried him. Then they came and told Jesus.

¹³ When Jesus heard, he withdrew from there by boat to a wilderness place to be alone. When the crowds heard, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ Seeing how large a crowd had travelled out, he felt compassion for them and healed those who were unwell.

Did you notice the contrast between King Jesus and Herod Antipas:

- - **Herod** has an official title: *tetrarch* (14:1). He's not actually *king* (as his father was), but Matthew calls him a *king* to contrast him with Jesus (14:9).
 - **Jesus** has received no title from Rome, Jerusalem, or Galilee. His appointment comes from another place, from his Father in heaven (3:17).
- - **Herod** fears things beyond his control, like the undying influence of someone he thought he'd killed (14:2).
 - **Jesus** faces the fear of rulers whose power comes from killing any who oppose them (14:13).
- - **Herod's** authority protects him with fortified palaces where he welcomes those who celebrate him, and imprisons those who don't (14:3, 6).
 - **Jesus'** authority leaves him unguarded, escaping to desolate places (14:13), protected only by his Father's wisdom (14:23).

- - **Herod** feasts with endless platters of food and dancing entertainment, showing off his opulence and influence (14:6).
- **Jesus** retreats to the desert, without food to offer his guests (14:15).

Apparently, Herod has everything; Jesus has nothing. So why are the crowds following Jesus instead of Herod?

People aren't silly. They know there's no point expecting justice from Herod. John was a prophet who called Herod out for his rebellion against the heavenly sovereign's Law. This world's rulers give no justice for ordinary people, for that would require the wealthy to relinquish their claims to power. Ordinary people aren't invited to Herod's lavish parties; they just pay the bill (taxes).

Thousands of ordinary people — maybe 10,000 if you count the women and children — trek for miles to be with Jesus. They know he's a different kind of king, a king with a heart for his people. His compassion focuses not on the strong and powerful, but on the weak and suffering. He sees their needs, hears their stories, and reaches out to restore them (14:14).

Providing for his people (14:15-21)

Jesus fled to get away from Herod's tyrannical powers. Thousands followed him, but the wilderness cannot feed them. What does he do?

Matthew 14:15-21

¹⁵ When evening came, his followers approached him, saying, "This is a wilderness place, and the time has come to dismiss the crowds so they can go home and buy themselves some food."

¹⁶ Jesus replied, "No need to dismiss them. You give them something to eat."

¹⁷ They responded, "We don't have anything here, only five bread rolls and two fish."

¹⁸ Jesus said, "Bring them here to me."

¹⁹ Then, ordering the crowds to sit on the grass, he took the five rolls and two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed them, broke them, and gave the pieces of bread to his followers. His followers gave them to the crowds.

²⁰ They all ate and felt satisfied. And they picked up twelve baskets full of leftovers. ²¹ There were 5000 men who ate that meal, not counting the women and children.

The disciples were overwhelmed when Jesus asked them to feed the crowds. Herod's storerooms would not have had enough! But Jesus' kingship comes from a higher authority, one that has a history of feeding the multitude in the wilderness (Exodus 16).

As the representative of heaven's kingdom, Jesus lifts up the little they gave him and presents it to the heavenly sovereign—the one who provides for every man, woman, and child, every day.

Jesus places his Father's provision in the hands of his servants, telling them to give it to the people in his care (14:19). And God has provided plenty for everyone (14:20).

What these stories reveal is the power behind these two rulers:

- At Herod's palace feast, people saw his authority — the power of Death.
- At Jesus' wilderness meal, people saw his authority — Divine Providence.

As God establishes his reign over the earth through Christ, we are liberated from the power of Death to serve our true eternal sovereign.

Until that day is complete, the conflict is not over. But the crowds have begun to follow the king who cares.

The reign without boundary (14:22-36)



Paul H. Wright, *Understanding the New Testament: An Introductory Atlas*, (Carta, Jerusalem, 2019), 19.

Herod was a *tetrarch* (verse 1). He was one of four rulers who reigned over the territory of Herod the Great. But Jesus' kingdom has no boundaries. No one else has authority over the whole earth, and no one reigns over the sea.

Matthew 14:22-33

²² At that point, he insisted his followers climb aboard the boat and cross to the other side ahead of him while he dismissed the crowds.

²³ After dismissing the crowds, he went up the mountain on his own to pray. When evening fell, he was alone there. ²⁴ By now, the boat was well away from land, pummelled by the waves because of the headwind.

²⁵ In the pre-dawn hours, he came to them walking across the sea.

²⁶ When his followers saw him walking across the sea, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they cried out in fear.

²⁷ At that point, Jesus spoke to them, "Be encouraged! I'm here. Don't be frightened."

²⁸ Peter replied, "Lord, if it's you, give the order for me to come to you across the waters."

²⁹ "Come," he said.

Climbing out of the boat, Peter walked across the waters towards Jesus.

³⁰ But in view of the blustery wind, he feared, and, starting to drown, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹ Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him and said to him, "You trusted me so little that you doubted me?"

³² As they climbed into the boat, the wind stopped blowing.

³³ Those in the boat worshipped him, "Truly, you are God's Son."

So many Exodus echoes! Bread in the wilderness (verse 19). Going up the mountain to talk with God (verse 23). Finding a way through the sea (verse 26).

The Moses connection is a theme in Matthew. Called out of Egypt (2:15). Tested in the wilderness (4:1). Receiving the revelation on the mountain (5:1). In conversation with Moses (17:3). And the Passover is the consummate moment that delivers God's people from death and establishes the covenant (26:27).

Peter finds out discovers that Jesus' authority over the sea extends to him too. Jesus can lead him through the unruly sea. Jesus saves those call on him as Lord and trusts where he leads (verse 28-31).

Jesus has authority as the Son of God (verse 33), the person on earth to whom the heavenly sovereign has entrusted his authority. It's the first time we have heard this recognition from human beings in the New Testament, rather than from the devil (4:3-6) or demons (8:29).

Once again, Matthew explains how the king uses his authority to help his suffering people:

Matthew 14:34-36

³⁴ Crossing over, they reached the shore at Gennesaret. ³⁵ Recognizing him, the men of that place sent word to that whole region. They brought in everyone who was suffering ³⁶ and they kept pleading with him just to touch the edge of his cloak, and as many as made contact were cured.

Your thoughts?

7.3 Conclusion

We started this series by asking how you understand Jesus' identity and mission.

Have you noticed how Jesus describes his **identity**?

He calls himself *the son of man* (8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41, and another 21 times in Matthew 15-28). Do you understand what this means? Do you see Jesus the way he saw himself?

Have you noticed Jesus' favourite phrase for his **mission**?

He has one phrase for everything he say and does: it's all about *the kingdom of heaven* (4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11,12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47, 52, and another dozen times in Matthew 15-28). Do you understand his mission as restoring heaven's reign to the earth? Was that the main thing he was doing?

The son of man, restoring *the kingdom of heaven*: do you understand Jesus as he understood himself? Is this how you've always understood Jesus, or quite different?

Keep meditating on Jesus: who he is, and what he was doing. We'll take a break for a few weeks. Then we'll see more of Jesus' identity and authority in Matthew 15–28, including the revelation Peter received: "You are the Christ!"

For more detail on Matthew 13–14, see:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Mat 13 | Parables of the king |
| Mat 13:1-23 | Who was the sower? |
| Mat 13:10-17 | Calling all creatives |
| Mat 13:11-17 | Planting seeds is better than cracking hard hearts |
| Mat 13:11-17 | Why parables? Jesus' answer |
| Mat 13:18-23 | Farming frustration and harvesting hope |
| Mat 13:24-43 | What about the weeds in God's world? |
| Mat 13:31-33 | The little seed that filled the world |
| Mat 13:33 | Infecting the world with good |
| Mat 13:33-35 | Hiding leaven in buckets of flour |
| Mat 13:34-35 | Parables help us get our bearings |

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| Mat 13:44 | Discovering what counts |
| Mat 13:45-46 | What's the value of God's reign? |
| Mat 13:47-50 | Why doesn't God sort it out? |
| Mat 13:51-52 | Trained for kingdom business |
| Mat 13:53-58 | How does Jesus become king? |
| Mat 14:1-12 | What power do the rulers of this world have over God's people? |
| Mat 14:1-21 | A tale of two kings |
| Mat 14:13-21 | Feeding the multitude |
| Mat 14:13-21 | The Moses connection |
| Mat 14:22-33 | Tyrants or tempests? From what does Jesus save? |
| Mat 14:33-36 | His healing presence |

The links are from <https://allenbrowne.blog/scriptureindex/>

You might like to read Matthew 15–16 for when we return after the break.