

WELCOME COLLEGE STUDENTS

INTRODUCE

Alright, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Matthew chapter 13. Matthew 13. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Matthew 13. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, Matthew 13 will be on page **819**.

INTRODUCTION: FALL SERMON SERIES

Well, today is our last week in this section of the Gospel of Matthew.

- We like to preach through books of the Bible here at Fathom:
- what's known as expository preaching.
- And we'll get back into Matthew next year,
- but we are moving into the Fall,
- and we've got a couple of things for you coming up.

First, starting next week we'll be doing a two-week mini-series on

SLIDE Church Discipline.

- The elders have been working on a church discipline policy,
- and in our study,
- we felt like we should teach a bit more on church discipline.
- So, the next two weeks
- will be this mini-series.

And then, for our Fall sermon series, we'll walk verse by verse through one of my favorite books: the book of **SLIDE** James.

- We've never preached through James at Fathom,
- and I love James,
- and I bet you will, too.
- So, from September 12 until Advent
- we're going to walk through the whole book.

So, let me plead with you to really take seriously attending this Fall.

- If you walk through this whole book,
- I guarantee, it will be formative in your faith walk.

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ILLUSTRATION: HEAVEN MOVIES

Now, I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that my first job after becoming a Christian in High School was at a Christian bookstore, and some of the weird things you could find in a Christian bookstore.

- Things like Testamints...yes, Christian mints.
 - Wrapped in scripture.
 - Because secular mints just won't cut it.
- Man, the Christian bookstore had lots and lots of "Christian art"
 - featuring either lighthouses...
 - or eagles.
- There were loads and loads of WWJD bracelets,
 - and their underrated cousin:
 - F.R.O.G. Fully rely on God. Frog.

- And I mentioned books...
 - by a bunch of different kids...
 - claiming to have gone to heaven...
 - and nobody laughed!?!

So, I was confused.

- Like, did y'all read these?
- And like them?
- Really, there has been a wave of popular books
- from people claiming to have a near death experience,
- or to code out in the ER,
- or something like that,
- and they have some sort of heaven experience.

So, the most popular of these books was one called Heaven is for Real.

- It was a book,
- and then they made a really mediocre Christian movie...
 - It's about a four-year-old pastor's kid who,
 - during an emergency surgery,
 - slips from consciousness and enters heaven.

Now, a quick disclaimer:

- you may be disappointed to hear
- that I've never actually been to heaven or hell myself...
 - though anywhere in the Southern US
 - in July is pretty close.

But based on your lack of laughter last week...

- some of you may not like what I'm about to say...
- but God does not intend for us to learn about the afterlife
- from people today who claim to have gone.

We are supposed to learn about it from the Word of God...

as we are all things in the Christian life!

- *"Well, Pastor, are you telling us that little boy's story*
- *about heaven isn't true?"*

Listen, I don't know...

- But it would seem that people can say
- whatever they want about the afterlife
- as long as they frame it from their own experience...
- and who can argue with my experience?

Well, the Word of God can!

And all we NEED to know about the afterlife is found in this book...
not in Heaven is For Real.

I'm calling today's sermon **SLIDE HELL IS FOR REAL.**

- That one's not quite as hot a seller
- as a 4-year-old...
- seeing his Grammy in heaven.

But just as fanciful as some of these Heaven tales...

are what people think of the doctrine of hell these days.

TRANSITION

Now, I've never preached a sermon entirely on the doctrine of hell. But we've been in Matthew 13, and there are 7 parables in this Parable Discourse of Jesus. And today we reach the seventh...and really, the climatic parable of this section.

- This is the Parable of the Net...
- and it is a parable about judgment...
- it's a parable about hell.

And for all the guess work around hell...

and for all the controversy about hell...

- Jesus spoke on
- and taught about hell
- very often in the Gospels.

And this is a parable in which Jesus warns us about hell.

Now, today's parable is similar to the parable of the wheat and weeds that Jon preached a few weeks ago.

- But in that parable,
 - the focus is on the time when the wheat and the weeds
 - are growing up together.
- God allows for both good and evil
 - to exist and grow up, as it were,
 - together in this age.
- But in the end, judgment will come.

And this parable focuses on the judgment. That's why it's the very last one.

So, what does this parable teach us about hell? Let's dig in.

Matthew chapter 13, starting in verse 47.

BLANK SLIDE

MATTHEW 13:47

[47] “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.

EXPLAIN: FISHING

So, this parable is the Parable of the Net. And we need to understand the different ways of fishing in ancient Israel. There are really three ways to fish.

The first is the way we fish. Ok?

- I fly fish...
- not well...
- but I wet a line from time to time.

And this was one way of fishing in Jesus' time.

In Matthew 17:27, Jesus commands Peter to go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself. This is hook and line fishing.

The second way to fish in the first century was casting a net. Back in Matthew 4:18, Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

- This net would be thrown out like a large frisbee...
- and at the end of the circle there were weights.
- So, as they casted this net out,
- the circle would collapse down around a school of fish,
- and they would pull a cinch tight to gather the catch.

But the net that Jesus talks about in our parable today is a completely different Greek term for net.

- The net that Jesus talks about
- is what's known as a troll net or a drag net.
- This type of net would be much, much bigger,
- and was only used by larger scale commercial fishermen.

A drag net...

- had one end that would be on a fixed point
 - either on the shore or on one boat,
- and the other end would be on a moving boat.

And this net would extend...

- between the fixed point...
- and the moving point...
- like a curtain...
 - some would stretch as far as a half a mile.
- And the top of the net would float on the surface with cork...
- while the bottom sank down with rocks, extending it.

And the moving boat...

- would then swing in a semi-circle
- all the way around
- until it connected back with the fixed point.

This would trap many, many fish, of all different kinds in the net.

APPLICATION

And what Jesus wants us to get from this image is that:

- This net is huge!
- And because of its size,
- it would universally gather fish of every kind:
 - ones that were good for eating,
 - and ones that were not.
 - Ones that were healthy
 - and ones that were sick.
 - Ones that were good
 - and ones that were bad.

The net was indiscriminate. It caught all the fish.

Verse 48:

MATTHEW 13:48

[48] When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

EXPLAIN: SORTING

So, the fishermen are on the shore, they drag in the net full of all the fish, and they start to sort.

They sort the good fish into containers...

- maybe these were the ones that were good for selling,
- or clean, right?
 - Cause there are some sea creatures
 - that were unclean for Hebrews to eat...

They are put into the category of “good”.

And then the other category is “bad,” and those fish are thrown away.

EXPLAIN: SAT DOWN

Now, just one thing I really want to note in this verse that gives us a hint about what’s going on, and those are the words “sat down”.

The men drew it ashore and sat down.

- Sitting down is a hint to the Son of Man
- sitting down in judgment.
- Romans 14:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:10
- speak of us all standing before the judgement seat.
 - The judge sits and the defendant stands.
 - This is the imagery here.

Now, if we only had the parable, we would be in trouble, because this is kinda vague.

But verses 49-50 Jesus gives the interpretation of this parable.

Verse 49:

MATTHEW 13:49

[49] So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous

EXPLAIN: JUDGMENT DAY

So, Jesus gives us some help. First, this parable is talking about the end of the age...it's talking about Judgment Day.

- And on that day,
- Jesus will return,
- and every single one of us will, before God,
- give an account for our lives.
- We will be judged.

Second, the separation is of the evil and the righteous.

So, Judgment Day isn't JUST for those who are unsaved, ok?

Remember, every kind of fish is caught in the net?

I think we think judgment day

- is for Hitler
- and murderers
- and rapists
- and, you know, bad guys.

And hear me, IT IS for them!

- But it is also for housemakers,
- and investment bankers,
- and students,
- and pastors.

And then Jesus ends his interpretation of the parable with a terrifying verse.

Verse 50:

MATTHEW 13:50

[50] and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

EXPLAIN

Matthew, in his gospel, uses two metaphors when he talks about eternal punishment:

- utter darkness with weeping and grinding of teeth
 - which he uses 4 times.
- And fires of hell
 - used 7 times.
- And the two are combined here!
- Weeping notes the sorrow of those being punished.
- And gnashing or grinding of teeth could refer to
 - the torment they will suffer,
 - or utter despair,
 - or intense anger.

TRANSITION TO PRINCIPLES

Now, I've said in the past,

- that if you aren't offended by at least some of the Bible,
- then you probably aren't reading it.

Because, man, there's some stuff in here that grates against our modern sensibilities....and the doctrine of hell is first and foremost!

- If there's any doctrine in the Bible
- that you wish were not there
- it is the doctrine of hell!

But that does not eliminate it. It is there.

HELL IS FOR REAL.

And Charles Spurgeon says this of speaking on hell:

"These are such weighty things, such that when I dwell upon them, I feel far more inclined to sit down and weep than to stand up and speak to you."

So, this is a heavy doctrine...

BUT if you evaluate what we should be preaching on...

based on the example of Christ...then we should be preaching on hell.

- Jesus talked about hell more than anyone else in the Bible!

But our generation doesn't do that.

- **It's convicting that we say so little about hell.**

DEFINITION

So, what is the doctrine of hell?

Well, theologian, Wayne Grudem defines hell like this:

SLIDE HELL IS A PLACE OF ETERNAL CONSCIOUS PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED.

And what I want to do is break that definition down. Bit by bit.

We can see this definition in our text, and in many other Bible texts.

So, let's break it down. First, **SLIDE HELL IS ETERNAL.**

In Matthew 25:46, when talking about the final judgment, Jesus says this:

SLIDE MATTHEW 25:46

[46] And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

SLIDE HELL IS ETERNAL

We love talking about eternal life...everlasting life...eternity with God in Heaven.

- But whatever eternal life is...
 - in terms of its length...
- so too, is eternal punishment.

That's hell.

I heard this quote from Jonathan Edwards, and it just made me depressed.

So, I thought I'd share it with you...

“If you take these things seriously, you have to imagine yourself cast into a fiery oven, glowing with heat...And imagine that your body was going to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, inside and out—feeling every fiber of it the whole time. What horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! If it was measured by an hourglass, how slowly would the time seem to go! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had another fourteen left. But what if you knew you must lie there,

enduring that torment in its fullness for 24 hours? How much greater, even, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year? How much greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years? But wouldn't your heart sink if you knew you must bear it forever and ever? That there would be no end? That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end than before...and that you should never, never be rescued. But your torment in hell will be immeasurably greater than this. How utterly inexpressible and inconceivable! How your heart and soul would sink in such a case."

HELL IS ETERNAL.

Second, **SLIDE HELL IS PUNISHMENT.**

There's **weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

- This is just one among several indications
- that there will be conscious punishment.

Another is the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:

SLIDE LUKE 16:22b-24

The rich man also died and was buried, [23] and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. [24] And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'

SLIDE HELL IS PUNISHMENT

Hell is punishment for the sins of this life.

“But,” you ask,

- *“if people are conscious in hell, can’t they repent?”*
- *Like wouldn’t they repent of their sins there?”*

Good question.

But, Revelation 22:11 says this:

SLIDE REVELATION 22:11

[11] Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

SLIDE HELL IS PUNISHMENT

EXPLAIN: REPENT?

This is saying that...

- the fate of the righteous match how they lived...
- and the fate of the wicked do as well.

The people in hell never repent.

- They remain filthy;
- they remain haters of God’s authority.
- Their hearts remain unjust and corrupted.

You may have heard that hell has a door locked from the inside.

- Yes, they hate the torment,
- but they hate the authority of God more.

The famous atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche, said he’d rather go into nothingness than surrender his will to the God of the Bible.

C.S. Lewis in his masterpiece *The Great Divorce*,

- tells the fictional story of a tour bus from heaven,
- that goes to hell,
- and brings hell beings up
- to see the outskirts of heaven.

Now, it's fiction, ok? But he makes the point...

- that almost no one from hell,
- even upon seeing heaven,
- will choose to go there.

You see, the Bible clearly teaches...

- that after judgment,
- hell is the result of a life
- spent in separation from God.
- It is the fruit of a life.

EXPLAIN: LITERAL

And you might also ask,

- *“Well, are there literal fires?”*
- *And literal sulphur?*
- *And literal worms?*
- *And literal darkness?”*

The images are awful. Fire, burning sulfur, torture, eternal death.

What is metaphor, and what is literal?

- Well, even if these things are symbols,
- they point to a terrible reality.

When the Bible talks of eternal life and heaven...

- the reality is always much greater than the symbol.
 - Streets of gold and pearly gates.
- That's probably not literal.
- But it just means that the most valuable earthly things...
- are going to be building materials in heaven!

And so it is with the symbols of hell.

- The symbol is just the closest earthly representation
- to the terrible reality.

Whatever they are pointing to is unspeakably awful.

HELL IS PUNISHMENT.

And thirdly, **SLIDE HELL IS FOR THE WICKED.**

- It's for the bad fish.
- It's for the weeds that grow up next to the wheat.
- It's for the evil.
- HELL IS FOR THE WICKED.

But most people assume they'll go to heaven.

- Like, as long as we don't commit some heinous sin,
- or become a Satanist,
- or become like Hitler or something like that.
- That's who hell is for!

But the scripture presents the opposite.

- God didn't create hell for us;
- he created us for heaven,
- but the rebellion of the human race,
 - in which we are all participating,
- has destined us for hell.

People sometimes say,

- *“Well, that doesn't seem fair!”*
- *An eternity in hell for only 70 years of sin?”*

But that's because we wrongly assume we know the extent of the evil done when sinners rebel against God.

- Sin gains its wickedness...
 - by the one it's committed against.
- And the severity of your punishment for a crime...
 - is based on who you committed your crime against.

ILLUSTRATION

For example:

- If you lie to me,
 - I might get mad at you or something,
 - but there isn't much I can do about it.
- If your lie under oath to a jury,
 - Well, that's perjury.

You see? Who you sin against matters!

- If you steal from me,
 - depending on what you take,
 - it could be a misdemeanor.
- If you steal secrets from your country,
 - you know, pull a Snowden or something,
 - well, that's treason.
 - Potentially punishable by death.

Who you sin against matters! The punishment incrementally rises.

Sin gains its wickedness by whom the sin is directed against.

- Now, what happens when you sin against
- an infinitely holy God?
- Well, that sin is infinitely wicked.

Sin against an eternal God warrants eternal punishment.

- It's not the duration of the crime,
- but the dignity of the one against whom it was committed
- that determines the severity of the punishment.

HELL IS FOR THE WICKED.

BLANK SLIDE

Now, right on the heels of this parable of Jesus, he asks his disciples something. So, look at Matthew 13:51

MATTHEW 13:51

[51] "Have you understood all these things?" They said to him, "Yes."

EXPLAIN

- Have you understood?
- Have you put all this together?
- Have you got all this kingdom of God stuff?
- Good and evil growing together?
- That the good is going to continue to permeate,
 - continue to grow,
 - continue to invade?
- That in order to be a part of the kingdom
 - you have to give all you have
 - for all Christ is?
- Have you put it all together?
- And do you see that it's going to go along like this
 - with good and evil until the end
 - and then comes a final separation?
- Do you have it?

And they said to him, *"Yes. We understand it. We understand."*

You see, HELL IS FOR REAL...

- and it's horrible,
- eternal,
- conscious punishment
- for the wicked...

But it doesn't have to be that way for you!

THE GOOD NEWS

This is WHY Jesus teaches so much on the terrors of hell!

So that we would hear!

- You see, Jesus Christ suffered the full penalty
- for your sin in his death on the cross...
- so that we would not have to.

The Apostle's Creed says that Jesus...

- *“suffered under Pontius Pilate,*
- *was crucified, died, and was buried.*
- *He descended into Hell;*
- *And on the third day He rose again from the dead.”*

Have you understood these things?

- Jesus preached on hell more than anyone else in the scriptures
- because only he can truly fathom the horrors of it!

And you don't have to go to hell.

- Jesus died so you could be with him,
- and enjoy heaven forever.

But you have to receive it, sincerely.

- It's an invitation you have to have to respond to personally.
- Have you chosen to receive Jesus?
- Surrendering to him in repentance and faith?
- Have you understood all these things?

His disciples say yes...and Jesus ends with verse 52:

MATTHEW 13:52

[52] And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

EXPLAIN: SHARE IT

The disciples say, “*yes, we understand all these things.*” And Jesus says,

- *“Ok, it’s time to bring it out.*
- *You’ve been trained for the kingdom of heaven...*
- *now it’s time to share it.”*

You see, the reason why it’s hard for us to think of the doctrine of hell

- is because God has put in our hearts
- a portion of his own love
- for people created in his image,
- even his love for sinners
- who rebel against him.

So,

- now that you understand it,
 - it’s time to spread it.
- Now that you have the treasure,
 - it’s time to share it.
- Now that you’ve been infected by the yeast,
 - it’s time to get some others infected.
- Now that you know the horrifying realities of hell,
 - it’s time to get to work sharing that there is still hope!

Listen, in my life, if it hadn't been for:

- my friend inviting me to his youth group...
- and for some youth leaders investing in my life...
- and for a young life retreat...
- man, I'm not loving and following Jesus!

And that's someone for you, too!

- Maybe a friend...
- Or a Sunday school teacher...
- Or a youth pastor...
- Or even a parent!

It was someone who got it! And they so wanted you to get it!

- Who it that for you?
- AND who do you need to be that to?

CONCLUSION

You know, I hadn't planned on preaching this passage today.

- I had planned on just finishing up Matthew 13
- before we move onto our Fall series,
- and I had planned on just letting this parable go
- because we preached the parable of the wheat and weeds.
- And it felt redundant...

Like, I hadn't planned on preaching on hell

- with college students back,
- and guests here,
- and all that.

But Jesus thought it was important enough to preach on hell.

So, who are we to do different?

- HELL IS FOR REAL...
- But Jesus suffered hell for us.
- That we might have life in him.

Have you understood all these things?

Those who have ears to hear...let them hear.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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