

5. What are some of the challenges and distractions keeping people from paying close attention and reflecting on what Jesus has said? Which ones do you struggle with?

6. The analysts at the American Bible Society suggest that the huge drop in Bible reading is related to reduced church attendance and connection since the pandemic. Why do you think they made this link?

7. What has helped you make Bible reading, reflection, and study a priority in your life?

## SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

---

### **The Secrets of the Realm (A Series on Matthew 13)**

“Getting in on the Secret” (Part 1)

Matthew 13:1-9

“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you but not to them.” (Jesus)

#### **Parables**

If parables are simple stories that put big concepts on the bottom \_\_\_\_\_ so that everyone can understand, the disciples would be asking, “Why are you making things so clear to the people?” But that’s not what they’re asking.

Matthew 13: <sup>10</sup> The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in \_\_\_\_\_?” <sup>11</sup> He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.”

#### **Why Secrets?**

- The Growing \_\_\_\_\_.

One-third of Jesus’s teaching will be in \_\_\_\_\_ from this point on.

Matthew 12: <sup>13</sup> Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. <sup>14</sup> But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of the crowds.

Matthew 27:15-23

---

Where is God leading you with your BLESS list this week?



## How Do We Get In On the Secret?

1. Stand out from the \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus is calling people to become disciples. That means you have to leave the crowd (the "\_\_\_\_\_ middle") and join his band of brothers and sisters.

John 6: <sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. <sup>67</sup> "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

2. Pay attention and listen \_\_\_\_\_.

- " \_\_\_\_\_ " (= pay attention)

Matthew 13: <sup>3</sup> Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "[Look!] A farmer went out to sow his seed."

- Hear (= listen \_\_\_\_\_)

The American Bible Society survey data said that roughly 26 million people had mostly or completely stopped reading the Bible in 2022. A 39 percent drop from the averages in the 2010's. And \_\_\_\_\_ of the most engaged Bible readers said they read God's Word less.

"The greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism but distraction." (Andrew Sullivan)

"...Our lack of margin to think through and reflect on life's big questions is glaringly evident. ...Kill boredom. Sanitize it of silence. Fill everything with something. Ear buds in. This cultural mantra is best epitomized by a statement from Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix, on the purpose of the company: 'Fundamentally we're about eliminating loneliness and boredom.' ...A lifetime of painstaking effort at reflection, risk, and error is replaced by a TED talk. And the modern 'expert' is the one who read an article about something once." (A.J. Swaboda)

## Personal Reflection & Small Group Questions

Please complete this study on your own, then bring it to your small group for discussion.

1. Looking back over your notes from this week's sermon, what particularly caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?
2. Read Matthew 13:1-9. The passage begins by linking this event to other events from that day. Go back to chapter 12 and list some of the events from that day that show growing opposition and misunderstanding.
3. The crowds who are listening to Jesus don't receive Jesus's explanation of the parable which comes later in the chapter. If they had been observing some of the events of that day, how might they understand this parable?
4. How do the instructions to pay attention and listen intently serve to call people out from the crowds and into discipleship? What actions could they take to understand what he's talking about?