Amen. Amen.
Turn with me in your Bibles, if you would, to Matthew.
Matthew chapter 13.
I heard a quote long ago that the quality of hope
hinges on the character of the one in whom hope is placed.
And it's true about a promise.
But the quality of a promise hinges upon the character of the one in whom promised.
I can break mine.
But praise God in heaven, he'll never break one of his.
Amen. Boy, good to be back home.
Good to be back.
On behalf of Mitch and her family, I want to thank all of you again.
For your many calls, texts, cards, thoughts, prayers, visits.
Many of you have been where we are, particularly where Mitzi is, or Daddy is.
A new place for them.
But God's already doing what God does, you know.
He is amazing. He certainly is.
Matthew chapter 13.
Begin reading in verse number 47.
I'm going to read down through verse number 50.
I want to continue.
I feel led to continue in these parables of the Lord Jesus.
Remember what we're looking at this morning.
It's not the message of a preacher.
It's not the message of your pastor.
These are the words of Jesus Christ himself.
And as you're turning, I want to kind of update you.
We are probably just a few weeks away from
publicly making the church website available.
There's still a few tweaks that need to be done.
But I got a sneak peek yesterday, because I'm
privileged, to look at it and navigate it a little bit.
And one of the things I like about it the most, it's user-friendly.
And what that means, for us over 50, we don't like technology or new things.
It's very easy to navigate.
It'll be live for those.
If you can't be at church one Sunday, you're at traveling, you can go
right on there and you can watch the service just like you're here.
You can go back and watch and listen to something from months ago.
So that's just right around the corner.
So thank you, church, for making that possible.
I appreciate the hours that Ethan Umphreys and probably
some others have put into this to make this possible.
So, Ethan, I know you didn't do it for recognition, but I appreciate your work.
Matthew chapter 13, beginning in verse number 47.
Jesus says,
Again, the kingdom of heaven is locked into a net
that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind,
which when it was full they drew to shore and
sat down and gathered the good into vessels,

but cast the bad away.
So shall it be at the end of the world.
The angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just
and shall cast them into the furnace of fire,
and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
This morning we're going to spend a little time on Jesus' parable of the net.
Let's pray.
Dear Lord, great is your faithfulness.
That you indeed are the great promise keeper.
That you never leave nor forsake, Lord, those who you've called to be your own.
Lord, we pray today that your word might go out and,
or that you might accomplish with it when only you can.
You are the only one that can bring true comfort and hope and peace.
Lord, you are the only one that can open the eyes of a man whose eyes are blind.
Lord, I pray that we leave this sanctuary today different than we come.
That there's someone today that doesn't know you,
that they might leave here a twice-born son of the living God.
But God, I pray for all of those who have come,
Lord, and they do know you and they have tasted your amazing grace,
that they would leave with a greater appreciation,
Lord, with praise on their lips of what you have done for us.
Lord, please take this time, you use it for your honor and glory.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.
And amen.
There's a question that Jesus asks,
that he says that he uses a lot in his teachings.
Jesus taught about many things,
loving, forgiving, divorce, marriage, sacrifice,
lots and lots of different things.
But the primary subject, indeed, what might have been his favorite subject,
was the kingdom of God.
And Jesus often asks,
what is the kingdom of God?
What is it like?
How should I compare it?
In other words, what level can I bring it down to
that this great God in heaven can convey this message to mortal men
in a way that they would understand it and they would grasp it?
That the kingdom of God is not some earthly realm.
It's not the Roman Empire or the United States or anything like that.
It's a spiritual kingdom.
It is a kingdom that is coming.
It is a kingdom that is at hand.
But Jesus says,
It is likened to a mustard seed.
Though it's the smallest of all seeds, when it is grown,
it grows up with branches in all directions.
Even the birds of the air come and find lodging and refuge in it.
The kingdom of heaven is a place where we can find refuge and nourishment,

peace, strength.
He says, It's like seed that is thrown on all different types of ground,
seed by the wayside,
and the birds of the air come and snatch it up.
It's thrown on rocky ground and it springs up for a minute because it has no root.
It withers away.
It's like seed that is thrown among thorns,
but because the individual loves so many other things,
he cares about so many other things,
that these other things just come in and they choke out the seed.
But some falls upon good ground.
He said, It's like leaven that permeates the whole.
When a man moves from being religious to being born again
and the Lord rules and reigns in his life, it will permeate every area of his life.
It'll get in your marriage.
It'll get in the way you raise your children.
It'll get in the way you find your entertainment.
It'll get in your checkbook.
It'll permeate the entire thing.
He said,
The kingdom of heaven is like wheat and tares.
They exist in the same field and they grow up together for a long time.
And basically,
you can't tell the two apart
until it's time for the harvest.
And the wheat and the tares,
you can now differentiate those things.
He says, It's like a hidden treasure and a pearl of great price.
Well, this merchant man comes seeking after goodly pearls.
He goes down to the bottom of the sea to grab this oyster,
this pearl that's in the oyster.
Down at the very bottom.
No hope for this treasure that's in the dirt.
No hope for this pearl that's in the bottom of the sea.
How did it not be for this merchant man who come looking for them?
It's a picture of the pursuing love and grace of God.
And by the way,
there's value in everybody here.
Amen.
And Jesus says here in verse 47,
It is likened to a net
that is cast into the sea.
The parable of the net.
Jesus is teaching about the kingdom.
And he likens it to a net.
There's a few things I want to share with you
this morning from this passage that really
just jump out to me and grab me.
They encourage me, but they also scare me.
This morning,

I wasn't planning on doing it, but I was thinking about this new church website.
And Ethan had asked me yesterday if maybe I could give him some information
that simply says a word from the pastor or something.
So when someone opened it up, it would be a little brief message for me.
And the verse that came to my mind,
and I didn't really think about it for five minutes,
it says that faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
That God's word,
when it is heard, when it is received,
if it isn't rejected,
if it isn't shunned,
it will bring forth faith in a man's life.
These are the words of Jesus,
and he gives them.
And these words speak.
One thing that Jesus says here in this parable of the net,
if we look here at verse 47, the first part of it,
he says,
again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net
that was cast into the sea.
One of my favorite childhood memories
was going to spend the summer,
two or three weeks each summer,
with my grandparents.
They lived in Selma, Alabama,
not far from the banks of the Alabama River.
And when my dad was there, my uncles was there, my
grandfather was there, one of my favorite things to do
was to go and go trotline fishing with them.
I don't know if you've ever done that.
They would put out the trotlines at night and go back very early in the morning.
They'd begin to tug those trotlines in, and there
ain't no telling what you could have on the end of it.
It could be a great big old catfish.
It could be a turtle.
It could be an eagle.
You had no idea.
But that ain't really what I like doing.
I like the day before.
And they would go,
and they would catch the bait for the trotline.
And my Paul,
that's my granddaddy, we called him Paul.
My Paul had an old net.
And they would go to the backwaters of the Alabama River,
that Spanish moss hanging from the trees.
And they would take that net,
and they would cast it out.
And they would drag that net in
in an attempt to catch crawfish

that we would bait the trotlines with.
And all my days of doing that,
I never saw one crawfish
climb out of the slough
and put itself into my granddaddy's net.
No, what happened was my dad and my granddad and my own uncles,
every one of them,
they took the net,
they cast the net, they threw the net, they let the net in the sink,
and they would drag it
and draw it back to the banks.
Folks, it's vital that we get this.
It is vital that we understand this.
The kingdom of God is not a ladder erected by men.
The kingdom of God is not a rope that is thrown up from men
all the way into heaven.
No, the kingdom of God is a net
that is let down
by God himself.
The psalmist says in Psalm 18,
he says, He drew me out of many waters.
Paul says in the book of Philippians chapter 4,
he says that I was apprehended.
We look at this parable of the pearl of great
price and this oyster at the bottom of the sea.
They didn't climb their way up.
They didn't dig their way out.
No, there was an effort made.
There was a search made
to come and rescue them.
A ladder erected from men to God
is a religion of the world.
It's a religion of the majority.
But the kingdom of God, Christianity itself,
is God reaching down,
doing something,
and the lives of men.
One of the most passages that speaks to me
about this the most is Ephesians chapter 2.
Paul writes,
he says, And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin,
wherein time passed you walked according to the course of this world,
according to the prince of the power of the air,
the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,
among whom also we all had our conversations in time passed in the lust of our flesh,
fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,
and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.
Those three verses are so dark.
They're so scary.

They are explaining what man is on his own, left alone.
But verse number 4 says these two words,
But God,
but God, who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us,
even when we were dead in sins,
hath quickened us together by grace through Christ.
God, Jesus is there and he's speaking and he's teaching
and he wants these men to understand
what this spiritual kingdom is,
what Christianity is,
what faith is,
and he takes this thing that they're all familiar with.
He says it is a net
that is cast down from heaven
downwards to men.
You say, Preacher,
why is it so important
that we grasp this
and we embrace this and we believe this
and we cherish this?
I'm going to quickly give you four reasons.
Number one,
and listen to me,
it gives great hope to the man who was buried in the depths of his sin.
Folks,
there is no one too deep,
there was no one too lost,
there was no one who was drowning too much because of his sin
that the net of God,
that the grace of God
cannot reach down
and save their soul.
Not one!
It gives great hope to the man who was drowning in
his sin that I don't have to make my way up to God,
that God in His grace has cast the net down to me.
But there's a second reason.
Folks,
it protects the believer from pride.
Where,
oh where,
is any reason for us to gloat in this passage of Scripture?
Where is there any reason for me to stick out my chest?
Where is there any reason to take pride in what I've done and what I've
accomplished?
Friend, there is none.
Paul writes to Galatians,
he says,
but God forbid that I should glory saving the cross
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus says, this great net is something that I've let down.
And He gives hope to the man who was buried in his sin.
And I have no doubt we've got a good crowd here today.
There's some of you thinking I'm too far gone.
I've done too much.
I'm not a church person.
I'm not a religious guy.
What in the world had anything to do for me?
There is hope because the net of God's kingdom
reaches down to the deepest and the darkest
holes in life.
But it also strips away
any pride
that might develop in any of us
of anything that we think
we might have accomplished.
But there's a third reason and I believe what the most
important reason of this is is folks this directs the glory
and the praise
to the only one that deserves the glory
and the praise.
And I look at this great kingdom that comes and all I can say is dear thank you Lord
that you would cast that net down for me.
Thank you Lord that you would draw me.
Thank you dear Lord that you would move on my behalf.
Thank you dear God.
But there's also a fourth reason.
Folks it's a great reminder
of one of the great purposes and the missions of the church.
You know what we're to be doing here?
We're to be worshiping God praising God directing glory and honor to God
but we are also to be extending we are to be casting we are to be throwing
and with all of our might
we are to be drawing
and we are to be pulling we are to be doing
everything that we
possibly can praise God in his holy name because there
are people who are buried in their sins there are people
who don't know the Lord and we can say guess what God has sent
a net for you.
It's a net that is cast down from heaven
not tossed up from in.
But there's something else about this net.
Look at verse 47.
It's a net
that catches all kinds.
He says again
the kingdom of heaven is like a net
that was cast into the sea
and gathered

of every kind.
My mind was going back to those sloughs
in Selma.
I remember my paul my uncles and my daddy out there they'd be casting for hours.
Sometimes they caught nothing.
I feel like that preaching sometimes.
You know what they didn't do?
They didn't quit casting just because they ain't caught nothing.
But I also remember
them casting their net and by the way Ronnie we're trying to catch crawfish.
They'd draw that net and it'd be full of beer cans and
sticks and Snickers wrappers and all these different things.
They didn't quit casting due to an undesirable catch.
No friend they just kept casting they kept casting they kept casting
we gotta remember folks this is a parable.
This is something that the Lord Jesus is teaching that we might understand Him
we might understand our condition
we might understand His love and His grace and His mercy we might understand
the purposes of the church so what is Jesus saying right here?
Listen to me
the visible church the local church is going to attract
and catch all kinds of things.
There'll be sheep in it
there'll be goats in it
there'll be wheat in it
and there'll be tares in it
you say why preacher why are all those things in the net?
Write this down
because the net
does not discriminate where my pa
and my uncles and my daddy and they threw that net
this was their idea hey it catches
what it catches
we're gonna pull it in we're gonna drag it in and the same thing is true
with the church of the living God
it's gonna attract some things what some might call undesirables it's gonna attract
some things what some might call desirables there'll be sheep in it there'll be
goats in it there'll be wheat in it there'll be tares in it why?
because the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is indiscriminate
remember
folks that Jesus came
into His own and purposefully
preached to those who received Him not
it was a very religious elite that He preached
to were the ones who had eventually killed Him
folks but Jesus kept casting He kept casting He kept casting you say why did He
keep casting because that was the only way for any body man to be caught there was a
demon possessed man that needed to be caught there was a man on death row that
needed
to be caught there was an adulteress that needed to be caught there was a beggar

that
needed to be caught a Pharisee that needed to be caught
a blind man a leper
all of these people needed to be caught and it was only through the casting
of the net of the gospel of the Lord that any man of these men
would be caught
I said this the other day and it's true because Jesus said it
folks it is not our job to root out the tears because we'll do more harm to the
wheat
than we do any good for the church
no
that's the Lord's doing
but it is also not our job
to determine who is net worthy and God have mercy
on us if we ever think we have the right to do it
and friend I say this because I've seen it done
I didn't know I was going to camp out here but I'm going to camp out here
God help us
God have mercy on us
if we ever get to the place
that we think we are the ones that are able to determine
who is worthy
of God's net what does net catch what did catch
it gathered of every kind it got all kinds it just went out listen Jesus preached
to anybody and everybody and friend that's the way we ought to do it now does that
mean we accept every doctrine in the local church that mean you accept every
behavior
and attitude and you don't call things what they are no that ain't what that means
at all but I'm going to tell you what as long
this ain't a threat but if we ever get to a place that we think we can determine
who's worthy
of grace and who's worthy of the gospel and it's accepted here and I can't
change your attitude you're going to have to find a new preacher
I'm walking
I've seen it done
and can I remind us of something
it's only because the net doesn't discriminate that Dickie Sparks was caught
it's only because the
net doesn't discriminate
that Angie Hutchison was caught
it's only because the net doesn't discriminate that Peggy Sparks was caught it's
only
because the net isn't picky that any of us were caught no all of us were dead in our
sin and we didn't make our way up to God God said no
I'm coming down to where they are I'm throwing it out to where they are and if
they come they come I'm going to cast it and I'm going to draw it and I'm going to
pull it and I'm not picking sides and I'm
not picking favors I'm just dragging them in
for that's the gospel
that's what this church should be about

he said it come and it gathered of every kind verse 47
y'all didn't take that the wrong way did you
okay y'all agree with me about we ain't got no right to do that amen
well I've seen some stuff just makes me sick
they're one of us
in other words they look like us and they dress like us and they act like us
and there's other to come they don't look like us they don't know how to dress
to come to church you know why they ain't there being
by the way
did that get somebody into heaven
what kind of nonsense is that
no
no this net goes out
it goes out and it catches and it pulls
but in time look here verse 48 we're going to read it verse 47
again the kingdom of heaven is like it's a net it
was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind
but in time
folks the net
will be full
verse 48 says which when it was full
they drew to shore
again I want to go back to the net this net wasn't that big I don't remember how
long it was it might have been as long as this pew possibly and extended it out
about this far you know something about that net it had a capacity
it had a strength it had a strength capacity
it had a room capacity
it had a lifting capacity
there's only so many things that it could catch only so much weight that you
could put in I mean you couldn't pull a car in with that net it would simply break
there was capacity to this net it was possible for this net to be full
what Jesus is teaching right here folks the kingdom of God does not have a
limitation
when it comes to size it does not have a limitation when it comes to strength
capacity it does not have a limitation when it comes to discriminatory capacity it
doesn't have any of these things at all what it does have friend it has a time
capacity it has a time limitation the net of God is not
indiscriminate but it is absolutely not
indefinite
there come a time
look verse 48
which when it was full they drew it to shore
folks the time will come
when this net of the gospel this net of the kingdom this net of God's work in our
lives it will be a time when it comes when the Lord Jesus Christ
he wraps it up he pulls it to shore this
limitation of time is stressed all in scripture
y'all know that parable the ten virgins with the oil and their lamps some lamps were
ready some weren't what happened the midnight cry came and the bridegroom come
what happened at the bridegroom come

they shut the door
it was too late
time had ended
and Jesus is saying here
this net thank God I
want to make my wife cry they ain't never better sweet a woman than my nana
my mother-in-law
I'm telling you she was about this yay big and she
was a bundle of dynamite and love and joy and just
but God did that
and at the risk of offending my own family and her
friends at the funeral see often times what we can do
is we can take people and we can put them on such a high pedestal that they actually
now become the standard for which we must meet
in order to enter heaven and be accepted by God
God help us
there was no hope for my sweet nana apart from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ
and Annette that reached down to her when she was in her early twenties she was a
mama and a she was a mama of two and a young wife who had come to church and what
happened the net of God's gospel come down and she was sweet then but she was lost
and God worked in her heart and it pointed out her sin and it pointed her to the
cross of the work of Christ and that her sin was laid upon him
and that he rose from the grave that he was a Lord his Savior and that he longed his
Savior and that's what made her acceptable in the eyes of God
it was the work of God it's the only thing
then his time came Saturday
but folks there is coming a time
when God says it is time to pull the net to the shore
here's a question I often thought about and asked
God has the authority and the power at this very present moment to end all suffering
all grief
all woe all pain
well why doesn't he do it
why doesn't God
just grab that net
and just drag it on the shore right now
can I give you the answer
because the net ain't full yet
look what the scripture says
verse 47
again the kingdom of heaven is like it's a net that was cast into the sea
and gathered of every kind which when it was full
they drew it to shore and the reason God hadn't done it right now is there are still
lost souls that need rescued there are still people who are at the bottom of the sea
covered in their sand there are people in this church this morning that time
after time after time the net has gone out the net has gone out and God says I do
have the authority I do have the right and there is coming a day that I will bring
all of this thing to shore but right now
my net is not full you say preacher you got
Bible for that 2 Peter chapter 3 verse number 9

the Lord is not slack concerning his promises some may count slackness
but his long suffering toward us not willing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance what
a gracious and long suffering savior we have
he endures the ridicule he endures the rejection
he looks down at this world and the sin that grieves him but he suffers long brother
Jeff he suffers long he suffers long he suffers long he said I've thrown out my net
and it's catching all kinds of things but the reality is it's not full yet
but friend there is coming a day
that it will be full
I want you to think about this for a minute
do y'all remember
I didn't study on this this morning I may not get it exactly right
the first
generation that come out of Egypt
the promised land was theirs it was promised by the Lord
the Lord took them a long way around
did they all make it in there
no
how many made it
Joshua and Caleb
the Lord basically said this entire generation you're going to have to die
you're going to die
and I want y'all to think about this for me for a minute it's nearly two million
people probably a million folks of that generation
dying left and right
and there was one little old lady still alive
I guess
could have been an old man
of that first generation
and the day came
the day came that he finally died
so now
it's time for the new generation
to go in
this is not a scare tactic this is the truth there
is coming a day that the last one will be caught
there's coming a day
that the very last soul
that will be saved will be saved
and at that moment that that occurs
God with his strong arm is going to take that net and he's going to pull it in he's
going to pull it in friend and if you are not one of those who are safely in the net
of the Lord hell will be your home
it will be full
it will be full
and when he does
he'll pull it to shore
you say preacher what happens then let's finish this up verse number 48
he says which when it was full they drew to shore

and sat down and gathered the good and the vessels
cast the bad away
it's coming a day
that our great God is going to save the very last one
I don't want to get into this I know there's all types of different beliefs and
things that the Lord comes back and
you know still everybody getting saved here and there
look unless the spirit of God works on somebody's heart
and God draws them
it ain't happening
this ain't the message but what is clear here there's a day that God says I'm done
I've saved the last one Stephen and I'm drawing this ashore and here's what God's
going to do and it's what my pa and uncle and my granddad did
he's going to sit down
in front of that net
that's a fat crawfish
that's a fat crawfish
that's a Miller light can
that's a stick
that's an eel
this is a picture that Jesus is painting of a reality
that when this all comes together the God with all knowledge the God that doesn't
discriminate the God that has cast this net out to the world he is going to sit down
and he will sever that word sever is huge he will sever the wicked from the just he
says that he will take the good what's he going to do it says he will put them in
the
vessels I love that what's that mean it means he's keeping these Ricky he's taking
people y'all get this now this is awesome it's fantastic this net comes out he draws
it out that he takes his that he has cleaned that he has
changed he's putting them in his vessels why because they belong to him
I got zero hope of keeping myself in the possession of God but he is faithful that
promise he has adopted me he has caught me he has cleansed me he has saved me he has
put me in his hand and he has put me in his vessels because I now belong to him like
that lost sheep lost coin lost son all of those things the hidden treasure
y'all that's fantastic
they belong to him
but he also says in that same context
he will cast
the bad
away
I do not have the vocabulary or the knowledge
to rightly convey
the depths of what the Lord Jesus is saying
look at what Jesus says in verse 49 and 50
verse 48
says which when it was full they drew the shore and sat
down and gathered the good and the vessels praise God
but he cast the bad away
he says so shall it be at the end of the world the angels shall come forth
and sever the wicked from among the just

and shall cast them
into the furnace of fire where they should be well in and gnash of teeth
the word sever
it means to divide
it means to separate
but the real meaning of this word it means to mark off by boundaries
I want you to think about this for just a moment it isn't a scare tactic folks
this is the truth this is the truth according to the Lord Jesus Christ there is
coming a day he draws this net to shore there's
husbands and wives that are going to be severed
you'll be separated
little boys grown men
separated
mamas and daughters separated
church is severed
when the Lord comes in
and he gathers
and he removes these things
you say
preacher that doesn't sound like a loving God
folks a loving God
a loving God became what we are
a loving God left heaven and became man
and lived in the darkness of this world that was rejected by man
he was spit upon and mocked and
scourged
yet he loved men so much
that he took the sin of humanity and he draped it all upon himself
and he went to the cross and died on their behalf and he lived a life that none of
them can live because the standard for getting into heaven is perfection
it's the absolute righteousness of God and he knows we
didn't have it so he performed it and he says father
I offer my righteousness for their
imperfections I take my sin upon myself and he did this for every single one
and now the gospel that goes out to every single one and I tell you friend if you
reject that God your final destiny is the just destiny
where God separates you from him for all of
eternity with his wailing and gnashing of teeth
the
amazing thing
is that he would put any of us into vessels
you know why he can
because he changed us
he made us something different
Jesus says what is the kingdom of God like and how should I compare it
I'm closing
it's like this big great net that goes out and it's the size of New Bethel church
and it lands
it lands you've heard
and when this net is full the Lord he takes it and he brings it to shore

and when he brings it to shore
he separates
the wicked from the just
based upon faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ
he went on to ask the disciples
do you understand these things
and they said yes Lord
yes Lord
friend if you're here today
and you're in possession of the Lord God of heaven
it's because he cast the net where you were and he drew you out of the deep waters
and he changed you
and he has you
and Robert Kelly you belong to him
praise his holy name
and this morning
if you have yet to respond
not the invitation of the Lord but the command of God
to repent and believe
today the net has gone out to you
see this fate isn't a fate that has to be
it doesn't have to be
but friend there's coming a time
where God's bringing it in
God's bringing it in
let's pray
heavenly father we thank you
number one that your
love is so vast
Lord that it would lead
you to move on our behalf
Lord I thank you for a net that didn't pick you
I thank you for a net that reached out to where I was
Lord a net that doesn't just draw a man in but it
changes him it saves him it cleanses him it claims him
but God I pray today
that we as a church would recognize what you've done and what the glory is to you
but God I also pray today if there's a man here
a woman here a boy or girl
who's yet to believe in you that they need to understand
that there's coming a day this net's full
all opportunities are gone
any hope is dashed
that today is the day
of salvation
in Jesus sweet name I pray amen
amen amen amen amen
amen