

## Lecture 15 – Parables

He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.” Matthew 13:11-12 (NIV)

### Key Terms

Parable

### Objective

\*To explain Jesus’ use of parables as illustrated in the parable of the sower and the parable of the wheat and weeds

### Lead Questions

\*What have you heard regarding why Jesus uses parables as a teaching device? Is it appropriate for us to use parables as we seek to communicate the Gospel? How can your understanding of why Jesus used parables make your teaching and communication of the Gospel more effective?

### Parable

#### I. Jesus Taught with Parables

A. Illustration: Parable of the monks. Similar to Jesus’ parables in some ways

1. Two monks and a day at the market
2. The official interpretations
3. The crucial question, “Where do you fit in this story? What do you make of it?”

B. Jesus’ use of parables

1. Their extent
2. Their time. Why does He use parables now?

#### II. Foundational Parable # 1: The Sower

A. The first parables. Addressed to crowds, interpreted for disciples. Topic is the kingdom.

B. The sower: context

1. Controversy and opposition, despite or because of Jesus’ signs.
2. The disciples’ question: Why, if this is the Messiah, are so few following? Why so little glory?

C. The parable of the sower. Matt. 13:3-9

1. Explanation: strange as it sounds, sower’s methods are common for the day, not folly. The yield is not typical.
2. What is the point? Is it merely a moral lesson?

D. Disciples: Why do you teach in parables? (13:10) Parables give to some and take from others

1. Because to you (emphatic) it has been given (divine passive) to know secrets of K. So, a sovereign decision. Yet also a punishment for unbelief (13:11-12).
  - a. Matt. 13:13: Jesus speaks in parables because—οτι (*hoti*, “because”)—seeing they do not see. Because they failed to understand what they had, parables punish them by taking plain word away (Amos 8:11).
  - b. Mark 4:11-12 Jesus speaks in parables so that—ινα (*hina*, “in order that”)—they may not see. Mark stresses consequences of parables. Essential idea is same. Matthew stresses reason, Mark the results.
2. Parables take away: no plain prose. Jesus can be dismissed.
3. Parables also give: How? Graphic, therefore memorable. But more than illustrations.
  - a. Vivid, close to reality, yet strange, thought provoking. Often open-ended, prompting listener to think, to provide meaning.

b. Story may disarm hostile listener > suspend opposition. Some surprise, like a joke.

#### E. Interpretation of the sower

1. Soils represent 4 types of people, 4 types of response to Word and K.
  - a. Nonbelievers (the path)
  - b. Counterfeit/temporary believers (the rock)
  - c. Defeated believers? Fruitless believers (the thorns)
  - d. True, fruitful believers (harvest). An astonishing harvest among them.
2. Point: K has entered world like a seed, without power, compulsion, or apocalypse. This is the mystery: K is here without consummation. Despite small beginning, an abundant harvest.
3. Parable is about God, His Word, and our responses. Parable is about Jesus, the sower.
4. Parable prompts Question: What about me? Where do I fit in the parable? What kind of soil am I?

#### III. Foundational Parable # 2: The Wheat and the Weeds, 13:24-30

A. Context: presupposes and builds upon the sower.

B. Story: Weeds among the wheat, sown by an enemy, grow together until harvest.

C. What is the topic: Church discipline, Christians and sinners in church, society and K?

1. Is it about church discipline? Point would be that it is impossible, and destructive to attempt, to root sinners out of the church in this age. Discipline difficult, so leave it to Jesus at the end.
  - a. In 13:25, 26: Enemy sows seeds in field, weeds grow later. K is planted, then corrupted.
  - b. In 13:41: At Second Coming the Son will weed evildoers out of His K. Some take this to mean the church. BUT, K does not equal the church. K is broader than church. "K" is also flexible. It can mean all who submit to God's rule OR all that God rules. The latter holds here.
2. It is about relation of K to world. Point. The K has come but society is not uprooted.
  - a. God plants His K but allows sons of devil to grow alongside it. God delays judgment.
  - b. Evidence: 13:38, "The field is the world and the seed = the sons of the K. So God has planted His sons, sons of the K, in the world. By this Jesus verifies second interpretation.
3. Parable of weeds teaches that the Son of Man is king and judge of world. He will root out everything that causes sin and all who do evil....But only at end of the age. Then the righteous will shine like the sun. The two Ks grow together until harvest.

#### IV. Further Parables of K (Two to Crowd, Three or Four to Disciples)

A. Mustard seed

1. The analogy, the strange feature: Mustard seeds do not grow into trees.
2. Point: Great final size of K. Insignificant beginning and great climax.

B. Yeast

1. Strange analogy. Provokes thought.
2. Same principal: small beginnings, great growth. New notion: incremental growth.

C. Parables to disciples. K arrives in unexpected form

1. Treasure hidden in field
2. Pearl
3. Fish

D. Conclusion: Have you understood all these things?

Disciples' answer is perhaps too positive, but Jesus lets it stand, and charges them: "Every scribe, having been instructed in K...brings out from his treasure store both new things and

old.” New things = things He has just taught regarding K, plus, we suppose, other truths coming from Jesus.

V. Preliminary Reflections on Parables

- A. Starting with everyday events, then a twist
- B. Some doubt about the meaning
- C. Veiled reference to Christ