

Parables – Introduction

- **Opening – Compare to Aesop's Fables**
 - fables are short stories to illustrate a moral or teach a lesson
 - **The Hound and the Hare**
 - A Hound having started a Hare from his form, after a long run, gave up the chase. A Goat-herd, seeing him stop, mocked him, saying: "The little one is the best runner of the two." The hound replied; "You do not see the difference between us; I was only running for a dinner, but he for his life."
 - after telling this story to a child, you tell the moral of the story
 - **Moral:** Incentive spurs effort
- **Define Parable**
 - parables – stories we do not quickly forget
 - root word "paraballo"
 - **para** = to come along side or compare
 - **ballo** = to throw or to see with
 - Greek word for *parable* includes:
 - riddles
 - wise sayings
 - proverbs
 - **parables** = similar to an allegory
 - **allegory** = a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one
 - **allegory** = every person, event, detail stands for something else
 - example: *Pilgrim's Progress*
 - different from parable in that not every detail in a parable represents something
 - **object lessons**
 - you are the salt of the earth
 - comparing salt to God's people
 - uses an object or person to explain a spiritual truth
 - **parables** – reveal hidden meanings
 - *Matthew 13:35* – "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."
 - *Psalms 78:2* – "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old."
- **Why Did Jesus Use Parables?**
 - **To reveal truth to some & hide truth from others**
 - *Matthew 13:10-11* – "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."
 - "you" = disciples
 - "them" = people who do not "have ears to hear" (verse 9)
 - *Matthew 13:13* – "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."

- parables reveal meaning to God's people & hide it from those who reject Christ
- *1 Corinthians 2:14 – "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*
- **example:** pillar of fire (light to God's people while at the same time it was darkness to the Egyptians)
- **Common method of teaching**
 - Jesus was using a method rabbis and teachers of His day often used
 - Jews would have been familiar with this type of teaching
 - **Examples:**
 - **Nathan** speaking to David – story of two men (2 Samuel 12:1-4)
 - **Samson** – presenting a riddle at his wedding feast (Judges 14:14)
 - *"And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle."*
 - **King Jehoshaphat** – the thistle and the cedar (2 Kings 14:9)
 - king of Judah wanted to fight Israel
 - Jehoshaphat answered with a parable
 - in essence: "it is like a thistle asking for my daughter to marry his son but a wild beast comes by and tramples the thistle"
- **Universal appeal**
 - most people tend to think in pictures
 - engages the mind and the emotions
 - most people have difficulty understand abstract ideas
 - beautiful and good – concepts
 - beautiful – what do you think of?
 - good – what do you think of?
 - beautiful woman – good man
- **To cause people to think about God**
 - Jesus used earthly stories to cause people to think about heavenly things
 - Jesus showed people God in the normal things of life
 - the rising of the sun
 - the falling of the rain
 - the growth of plants
 - Story is told – a Puritan and his friend were walking. They passed a lovely flower, and the friend remarked on its beauty. The Puritan said, "I thank God I have learned to call nothing lovely in this lost and sinful world." (*The Parables of Jesus* by William Barclay)
 - complete opposite of Jesus' viewpoint
 - the things of this world can direct our thoughts to God
- **How to Understand Parables**
 - **Look for Key Words**
 - key words let you know the following verses will be a parable
 - "is like" – the kingdom of God is like

- placing two things side by side
 - **abstract concept** = Kingdom of God
 - **known object or person**
 - sower
 - mustard seed
 - leaven
 - treasure
 - merchant man
 - net
 - certain king
- **Study the context**
 - use Who, What, When, Where, Why and How
 - is this parable **anywhere else** in the Bible?
 - additional details
 - are phrases from this parable anywhere else in the Bible?
 - he that hath ears to hear
 - Where is the **location**?
 - city or town or countryside
 - Study **customs** from Bible times
 - The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) makes much more sense when one understands the Jewish marriage customs present at the time of Jesus
 - many parables drew on Old Testament Scriptures – common to the Jewish audience
 - Master/Judge/King figures = God
 - sheep/servants/workers = followers of God
 - **Who is the audience?**
 - sometimes the audience understood the parable but did not understand the spiritual lesson
 - *Matthew 25:41-46 – "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."*
 - **Parable of the Wicked Husbandman**
 - husbandmen (taking care of the owner's vineyard) kill the servants & the son
 - priests & Pharisees saw themselves in the parable
 - *"perceived that he spake of them"*
 - yet still wanted to harm Jesus
 - **Biblical context:** Scriptures before & after
 - Luke, Chapter 15, groups three parables together (the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Parable of the Lost Coin, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son) to respond to the Pharisees and scribes who were hypocrites that did not understand the grace of God
 - Was there a problem in the Scriptures before?
 - Was a question asked in the Scriptures before?
 - "parable must always be interpreted in the light of its background" (William Barclay)
 - **Look for the Main Point**
 - all details point to this

- the reason the parable was given
- often found at the end of the parable
- answer a question

Sources:

- <http://unlockingthebible.org/understanding-interpreting-jesus-parables/>
- <http://www.christianbiblereference.org/jparable.htm>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-parables>
- *The Parables of Jesus* by William Barclay