

To Speak in Parables

Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

Background Information on Parables

What is a parable?

- ◇ Parable: from the Greek word *parabole* which translates the Hebrew *mashal* which means “to be similar, to be comparable.” A parable is an extended metaphor, or simile, frequently becoming a brief narrative, generally used in Biblical times for didactic purposes. (Not to be confused with an allegory.) *from the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.*
 - ◇ At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.
C.H. Dodd *Parables of the Kingdom*
 - ◇ With Jesus, the device of parabolic utterance is used not to explain things to people's satisfaction but to call attention to the unsatisfactoriness of all their previous explanations and understandings.
Robert Farrar Capon, *The Parables of the Kingdom*
 - ◇ Parables function as *metaphors* challenging or inviting the audience into a new or deeper *experience* of God's *dominion*, a dominion identified with those who are the last, lost, least, little, or dead.
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Why did Jesus use parables?

Matthew 13:34-35 Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. {35} This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world." (quoting Psalm 78:2)

Mark 4:10-13 ¹⁰When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; ¹²in order that (*hina*)
'they may indeed look, but not perceive,
and may indeed listen, but not understand;
so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'"

¹³And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables?"

Mark 4:33-34 With many such parables Jesus spoke the word to the people, as they were able to hear it; {34} he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Mark 12:12 ¹²When they [chief priests, scribes, elders] realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd.

Suggested Books for Further Study:

- ◇ *The Parables of the Kingdom | The Parables of Grace | The Parables of Judgment* by Robert Farrar Capon - I highly recommend this series of books. Engagingly written, well-informed, and with a pastoral interest. (\$21 for the set.)
- ◇ *Hear Then the Parable* by Bernard Brandon Scott - Introductory material is somewhat technical, but his exposition is fascinating and provocative. (~\$15) A shorter and less technical version of this book is now available as *Re-Imagining the World*.
- ◇ *Speaking Parables: A Homiletic Guide* by David Buttrick - An informed study with an interest in how a parable may be applied to preaching.
- ◇ *What Are They Saying about the Parables?* By David B. Gowler - An excellent survey of the issues involved in parable research and interpretation.
- ◇ *The Parables of Jesus : A Commentary* by Arland J. Hultgren—The most recent and comprehensive (~\$25)

THE PARABLES OF JESUS - LUKAN ORDER

PARABLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	THOMAS*
House built on rock/sand	7.24-27		6.47-49		
Two Sons	21.28-32		7.29-30		
Sower and seed	13.1-23	4.1-20	8.4-15		82.3-13
Good Samaritan			10.29-37		
Importunate Friend			11.5-8		
Rich Fool			12.16-21		92.3-10
The Doorkeeper		13.33-37	12.35-38		
Thief	24.43-44		12.39-40		85.7-10; 98.6-10
Good and Wicked Servants	24.45-51		12.41-46		
Way to Judgment	5.25-26		12.58-59		
Barren Fig Tree	21.18-19	11.12-14	13.1-9		
Mustard seed	13.31-32	4.30-32	13.18-19		84.26-33
Leaven	13.33		13.20-21		97.2-6
Proper Guests			14.12-14		
Great Supper	22.1-10		14.15-24		92.10-35
Tower Builder			14.28-30		
Campaign Planner			14.31-32		
Salt	5.13	9.49-50	14.34-35		
Wedding Guest			14.7-11		
Prodigal Son			15.11-32		
Lost Sheep	18.10-14		15.3-7		98.22-27
Lost Coin			15.8-10		
Unjust Steward			16.1-9		
Rich Man and Lazarus			16.19-31		
Flood	24.37-42	13.35	17.26-36		
Servant's Reward			17.7-10		
Unjust Judge			18.1-8		
Pharisee and Publican			18.9-14		
Pounds	25.14-30	13.34	19.11-27		
Wicked Husbandmen	21.33-46	12.1-12	20.9-19		93.1-18
Budding Fig Tree	24.32	13.28	21.29-30		
Tares	13.24-30, 36-43				
Hidden treasure	13.44				98.31-99.3
Pearl	13.45-46				94.14-18
Net	13.47-50				81.28-82.3
Unforgiving Servant	18.23-35				
Laborers in Vineyard	20.1-16				
Wedding Garment	22.11-14				
Ten Bridesmaids	25.1-13				
Seed growing secretly		4.26-29			85.15-19
ENACTED (?) PARABLES					
Ten Lepers			17.11-19		
Washing Disciples' Feet				13.1-20	

**The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus. Though it shows the influence of an early Christian heresy called Gnosticism, it is still very important because its versions of Jesus' sayings are independent of those recorded in the canonical Gospels.*