



- "The meaning of the 'temptation story' is not so much that Jesus was put in the way of sin and resisted; rather, the story is about Jesus' acceptance of his mission ... The Jesus who confronts us is not simply the one who has been tempted, but the one who has emerged from his ordeal ... Jesus was tested to see whether he was prepared to renounce the easy way of power and public success and obediently tread the hard road marked out by Isaiah's servant ... The 'get behind me Satan' ... remark shows that Jesus faced an ordeal that tried him to the uttermost."
- Jeremias, Joachim (2012). *New Testament Theology*. SCM Press. 74–75.

- After John the Baptist was arrested Jesus went to Galilee proclaiming “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:14-15).”
- John describes his second sign: healing an official’s son
- When he was rejected in Nazareth, he moved on and makes Capernaum his home base in fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1
 - The areas mentioned in Isaiah 9 were the first regions to face heavy oppression and captivity under Assyria.
 - This historically bleak area was promised a reversal, fulfilled here in Jesus - “light in the darkness”



- Jesus begins to demonstrate a key biblical principle - the Kingdom of God is at hand as He heals and ministers
- He calls His disciples- they number 12. These 12 men show a link between the Old and New Covenant. Just as the 12 tribes were the foundation of Israel, these 12 would be the foundation of the New Israel.
- All those who follow Jesus as learners can be called “disciples” but these 12 were set aside as “apostles.” All apostles are disciples, not all disciples are apostles.
- An apostle was the title used in the secular world for an official commissioned to speak in the name of Caesar or another authority.
- To disobey an apostle of Caesar was to disobey Caesar.

- It is also significant that Jesus called the apostles to Himself on a mountain.
- Recall that the old covenant community was formally constituted under Moses as Mount Sinai.
- Here, again on a mountain, Jesus inaugurated a new era and community. He fulfills the work of Moses and steps into His role as a mediator of the new covenant.
- It is from this mountain then that Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount.



- Let us revisit Exodus 33
- In Exodus 33:18, Moses prays to Yahweh, saying "I pray You, show me Your glory." By this point in the book of Exodus, Moses had heard Yahweh's audible voice at the burning bush, witnessed the pillar of cloud lead Israel out of captivity, watched as the water of the Red Sea was parted and Pharaoh's armies were thwarted. He had seen water rush out of a rock and the fire fall on Mount Sinai.
- He had even experienced Yahweh's grace in the face of the people's rebellion with the golden calf. As Moses and Yahweh are together on Mount Sinai, Yahweh tells Moses that the people have corrupted themselves. Moses pleads with Yahweh, reminding Him of the promise He had made to Abraham, and Yahweh relents. After Moses deals with the issue of idolatry, he tells the people:



- You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." Then Moses returned to the Lord, and said, 'Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!' The Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. But go now, lead the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you. (Exodus 32:30-34)'"
- Although Moses had already interceded for the people before he came down Mount Sinai, now, having seen the depravity with his own eyes, he will go to the Lord and try to make atonement for he knows the penalty for idolatry is death (Exodus 22:20).

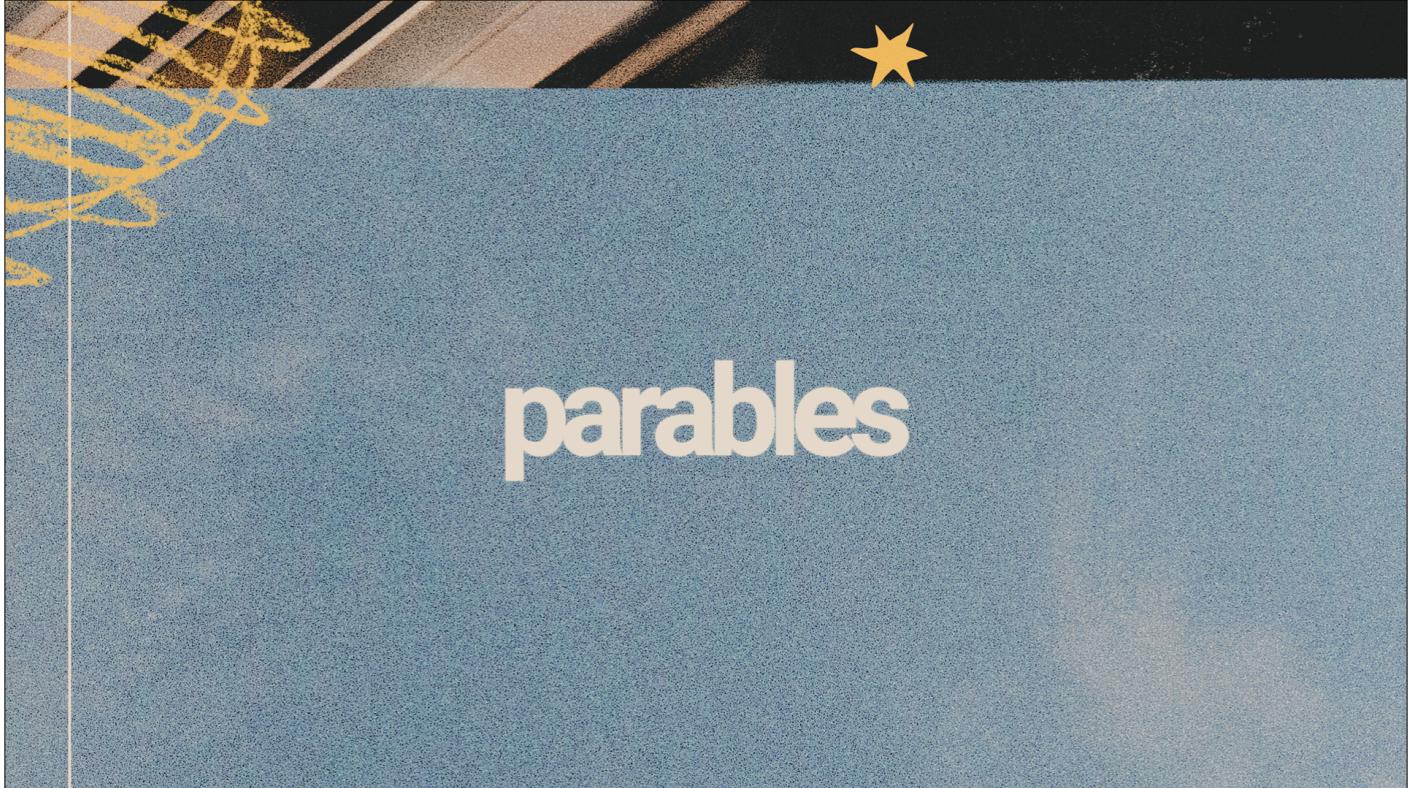
- As Moses approaches the Lord, he knows that Israel had sinned so terribly that an animal sacrifice would not suffice. Moses asks God to forgive the people on the basis of his sacrificial identification with them.
- Moses could never have borne the sin of the people, truly, but the Lord agrees to spare the nation. However, He has the right to judge individual sinners. He will allow the people to take the land as He had promised and they would be guided and protected but He Himself would not remain with them in a personal way. Yet, Moses draws close to Yahweh again at the tent and intercedes once again that Yahweh would be close to them in their journey to the Promised Land. Yahweh agrees, saying "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name (Exodus 33:17)."
- ALL of this has happened and yet, Moses prays that he would see even more of Yahweh's glory. He knew that he and the people had only seen a small glimpse of the unfathomable depth of God's glory.

- And so here we are again, on a mountain. With the only one that could bear the sins of the people - Jesus, God will us.
- Moses prayed to see more of God's glory and here we see the "Word became flesh" from John 1:14. When John chooses the phrase in John 1 that "he made his home among us" it means "he pitched his tent with us" or "he tabernacled with us."
- John would have chosen this word specifically to evoke an image of the tabernacle in the desert of Exodus. The presence of God, the Shekinah, was seen in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. When it was completed, this glory filled the tabernacle, making it the most sacred object for it was the physical manifestation of God's presence among His people. Jesus has come and tabernacled with us and what was once restricted to the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and, later, the Temple is now visible fully in the person of Christ, "the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

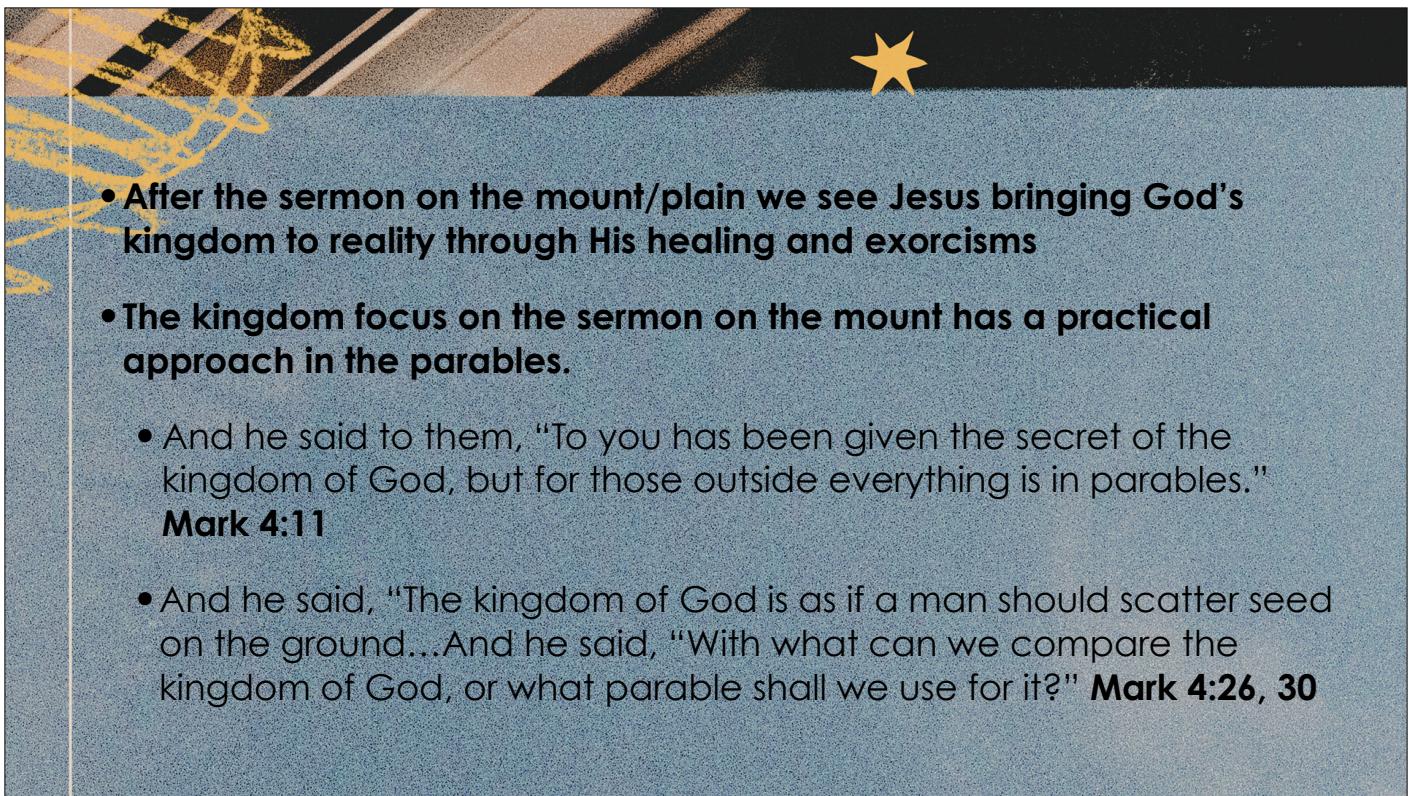


- Let us return to Exodus then. In Exodus 33:18 Moses asks to see God's glory and "then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth.'" (Exodus 34:6). The last two words are of key importance here. His gracious lovingkindness (hesed) and truth/covenant faithfulness (emeth) should be in mind as we read John 1:14 "full of grace and truth" for Christ is the embodiment of the Father's gracious love and evidence of His covenant faithfulness. In Christ is the grace of God seen and He is the only truth.
- As the remainder of the Old Testament unfolds, the need for a Savior becomes increasingly obvious. It could not be Moses, nor David, or any other man. It has to be Jesus. His atonement in our place is the only price sufficient to pay for our sin.





parables

- 
- After the sermon on the mount/plain we see Jesus bringing God's kingdom to reality through His healing and exorcisms
 - The kingdom focus on the sermon on the mount has a practical approach in the parables.
 - And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."
Mark 4:11
 - And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground...And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?" **Mark 4:26, 30**

Purpose of Parables

- Consider how stories disarm resistance - that is why sharing our personal testimonies are so impactful
- Reveal and conceal truth (Lk 19:11–12; Matt 13:1–17)
- Engender memory (Lk 10:25–37)
- Persuade—or sift (Matt 21:45)
- Fulfill prophecy (Matt 13:35)
- Lay claim to deity (Matt 22:2)

Purpose and Function

- Like a picture.
- Like a mirror.
- Like a window
- Like a punchline of a joke or a punch in the gut.
 - Jeffrey Arthurs suggests that we learn how to pass the punch along.
- Like holy sandpaper
- Like an ellipsis.
- Like indirect lighting.
- Like the point of an arrow in a chiasm.
- Like seeds planted in soil.
- Like a political, religious, and social subversion.

- **English Dictionary Definition of Parable:** A usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle.
- In Greek, para means “alongside” and bole means “to set.” Therefore, the word parabole refers to something that is set alongside another for comparison and contrast. However, the meaning of our English word parable doesn’t quite allow us to understand what Jesus’ parables are all about.

- Parables are not simply moralist tales and they are not theology lessons.
- The parables are one among many ways that Jesus confronted Israel with his offer of the Kingdom of God. This is why so many of Jesus’ parables begin with the phrase “the Kingdom of God can be likened to” or contain the phrase “the Kingdom.”
 - The four soils (Matthew 13:1-23, esp. v. 19)
 - The wheat and the weeds (Matthew 13:24-30)
 - The mustard seed and the hidden yeast (Matthew 13:31-33)
 - The great feast and ungrateful guests (Luke 15:15-24)
- We can think of Jesus giving us the same principles He gave us in the Sermon on the Mount but in a different format.

- Parable essentially means “throw beside” or “a comparison”
- It is an anecdotal comparison - earthly stories with heavenly meaning. Thus, it actually can connect back with our OT Prophets.
- “At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature of 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.” (Dodd)
 - Jesus has been described as a “metaphoric theologian”
 - Metaphors, symbolism, and analogies are not always easy to understand

- Parables are not unique to Jesus. We have Buddhist and Chinese parables. Aesop fables can be traced back to Syrian origins.
- We have some OT ones to consider:
 - 2 Sam 13:1-20 Parable of 2 Sons
 - 1 Kings 20:3-4 Parable of the Disguised Prophet
 - Judges 9:7-15 Parable of the Olive Tree and Thorn Bush

- What is unique about the parables is what Jesus did with them. His use of parables is actually consistent with Greco-Roman parables. Jesus drew on the Greco-Roman tradition of His hearers.
- Greco-Roman parables tended to be a little more poetic
- Seneca used ones that were primarily interrogative parables
- Parables became more persuasive over time

As part of his campaign, Jesus told stories.... They were, for the most part, not simply "illustrations," that is, preachers' tricks to decorate an abstract thought or complicated teaching. If anything, they were the opposite. Jesus' stories are designed to tease, to clothe the shocking and revolutionary message about God's Kingdom in garb that would leave the listeners wondering, trying to think it out. They were stories that, eventually, caused Israel's leaders to decode his rich message in such a way as to frame a charge against him, either of blasphemy, sedition, or "leading the people astray." Whatever the parables are, they are not, as children are sometimes taught in Sunday school, "earthly stories with heavenly meaning." Rather, they were expressions of Jesus' shocking announcement that God's Kingdom was arriving on earth as in heaven.

N. T. Wright, Simply Jesus, 87–88

Parables as Subversion

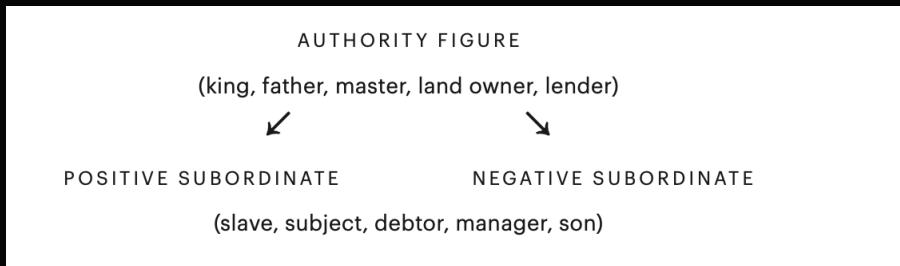
- Parables don't just illustrate truth. They *challenge* how we see reality.
- "Parables often contain a deep structure of subversion, calling conventional ways of viewing reality and valuing things into question... announcing that the kingdom Christ proclaims is based on new values, emphasizing divine grace over human merit."
(Ryken, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*)
- What Jesus subverts:
 - Politically: the oppressed
 - Culturally: agrarian assumptions
 - Socially: honor/shame; rich/poor
 - Religiously: elite vs. people of the land
 - Racially: Jew, Gentile, Samaritan

How Subversion Works in Parables

- Jesus subverts by:
 - Using **familiar images and characters** (Who plays the "God role" in the story?)
 - Making **unexpected connections** (Lk 10:25–37; 12:16–21; 15:1–32; 18:9–14)
 - **Result:** Parables often **polarize** the hearers. They expose hearts, not just minds.

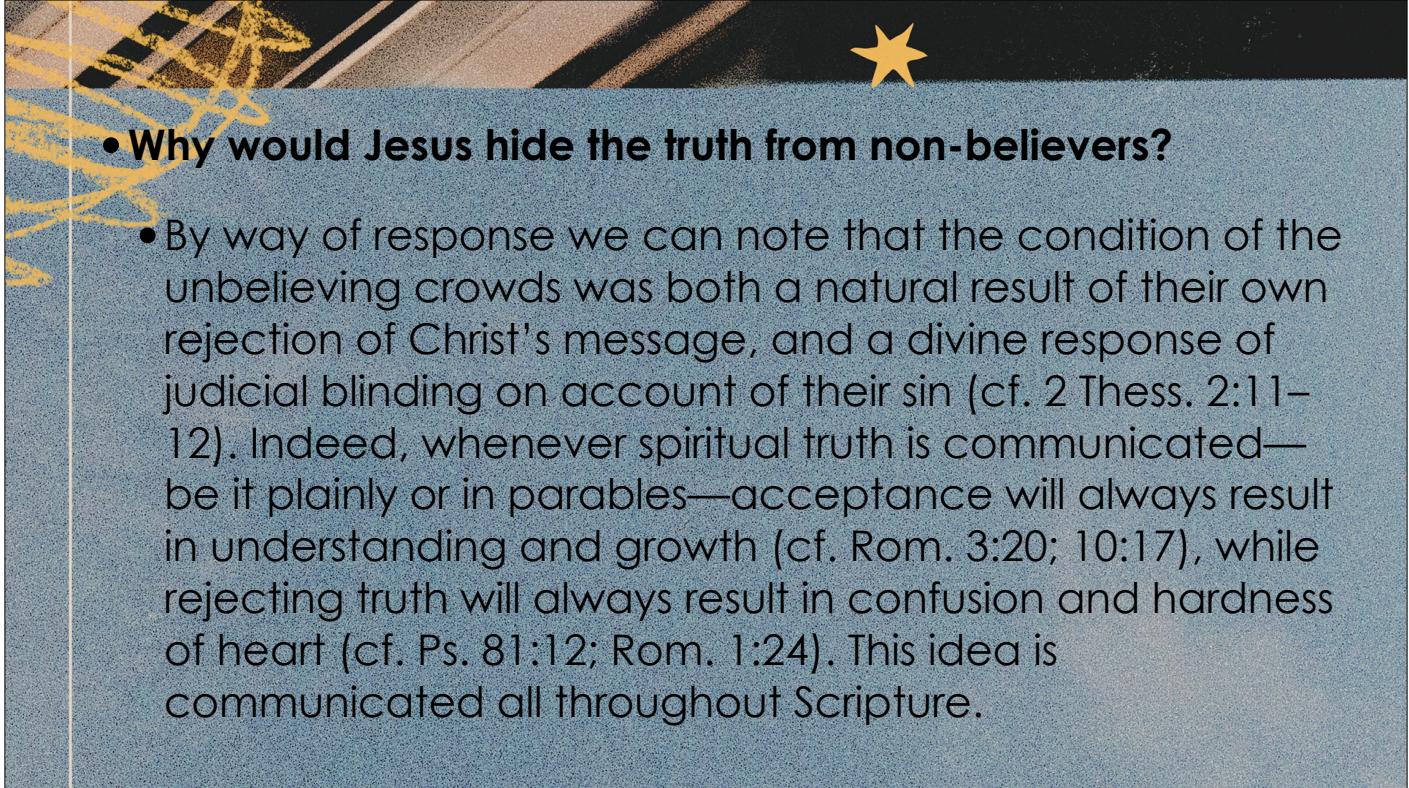
How Subversion Works in Parables

- Jesus subverts by:
 - Using **familiar images and characters** (Who plays the “God role” in the story?)



- Making **unexpected connections** (Lk 10:25–37; 12:16–21; 15:1–32; 18:9–14)
- **Result:** Parables often **polarize** the hearers. They expose hearts, not just minds.

-
- The reason why Jesus taught in parables was not to explain spiritual truths to the crowds, but to keep spiritual truths from the crowds.
- “And he replied: Go! Say to these people: Keep listening, but do not understand; keep looking, but do not perceive. Make the minds of these people dull; deafen their ears and blind their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their minds, turn back, and be healed (Is 6:9–10)”



• Why would Jesus hide the truth from non-believers?

- By way of response we can note that the condition of the unbelieving crowds was both a natural result of their own rejection of Christ's message, and a divine response of judicial blinding on account of their sin (cf. 2 Thess. 2:11–12). Indeed, whenever spiritual truth is communicated—be it plainly or in parables—acceptance will always result in understanding and growth (cf. Rom. 3:20; 10:17), while rejecting truth will always result in confusion and hardness of heart (cf. Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24). This idea is communicated all throughout Scripture.

“Parables sound absolutely ordinary; casual stories about soil and seeds, meals and coins and sheep, bandits and victims, farmers and merchants. And they are wholly secular; of his forty or so parables recorded in the Gospels, only one has its setting in church and only a couple mention the name God. As people heard Jesus tell these stories, they saw at once that they weren't about God, so there was nothing in them threatening their own sovereignty. They relaxed their defenses. They walked away perplexed, wondering what they meant, the stories lodged in their imagination. And then, like a bomb, they would explode in their unprotected hearts. An abyss opened up at their feet. He was talking about God; they had been invaded.”

Peterson, The Contemplative Pastor, 32.

NEXT LEVEL: SUPPLEMENT TO SESSION 8
WHERE ARE THESE SUBVERSIVE STORIES
 Mark Scott

NOTE #1: Justifiable lists can be found in books that interpret the parables as well as places such as the *NIV Study Bible* under Lk. 15 (1570-1571) or the Snodgrass article in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (595). In chronological order:

<u>Parable:</u>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
Lamp Under the Bowl	5:14-15	4:21-22	8:16; 11:33
Wise & Foolish Builders	7:24-27		6:47-49
New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
Sower and the Soils	13:3-8, 18-23	4:3-8, 14-20	8:5-8, 11-15
Wheat and Tares	13:24-30, 36-43		
Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
Yeast	13:33		
Hidden Treasure	13:44		
Valuable Pearl	13:45-46		
Fisherman's Net	13:47-50		
Owner of the House	13:52		
Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:4-7
Unmerciful Servant	18:23-34		
Workers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
Two Sons	21:28-32		
Tenants	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18
Wedding Banquet	22:2-14		
Fig Tree	24:32-35	13:28-29	21:29-31
Faithful and Wise Servant	24:45-51		12:42-48
Ten Virgins	25:1-13		
Talents (and minas)	25:14-30		19:12-27
Sheep and Goats	25:31-46		
Growing Seed		4:26-29	
Watchful Servants		13:35-37	12:35-40
Moneylender			7:41-43
Good Samaritan			10:30-37
Friend in Need			11:5-8
Rich Fool			12:16-21
Unfruitful Fig Tree			13:6-9
Lowest Seat			14:7-14

<u>Parable</u>	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>
Great Banquet			14:16-24
Cost of Discipleship			14:28-33
Lost Coin			15:8-10
Lost (prodigal) Son			15:11-32
Shrewd Manager			16:1-8
Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
Master and his Servant			17:7-10
Persistent Widow			18:2-8
Pharisee and Tax Collector			18:10-14

NOTE #2: The above list does not include passages such as:

The Strong Man Bound	12:29-30	3:22-27	11:21-23
Father and Children's Requests	7:9-11		11:11-13
Two Ways and Two Doors	7:13-14		13:23-27
Thief in the Night	24:42-44		12:39-40
Good and Bad Trees	7:16-20		
Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-18)			
True Vine (Jn. 15:1-8)			

Or passages such as small similes, e.g. Mk. 7:17

- **Why doesn't the Gospel of John describe the parables?**

- The Gospel of John does not contain traditional, story-form parables found in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), as it focuses more on long, theological discourses and direct "I Am" revelations of Jesus' divinity.
- Instead of narratives like the Prodigal Son, John utilizes metaphors, allegories, and symbolic language—often called *paroimia* (figures of speech)—such as "I am the bread of life" or "I am the true vine".
- John concentrates on Jesus' identity, with teachings centered on his divinity rather than the Kingdom of God parables.



the sermon on the mount

BibleProject Guide

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount



Sermon on the Mount

Intro to the Sermon on the Mount

If you've heard about Jesus of Nazareth, you likely know he was a famous teacher, and his most well-known words, recorded in the "Sermon on the Mount," have shaped countless lives. Some of his teaching has become proverbial, statements such as "Love your neighbor as yourself" or "Do unto others what you would have them do to you." The Sermon on the Mount is short, only three chapters long, but its

Contents

About

The Literary Design of the Sermon on the Mount

God's Kingdom in the Story of the Bible

Waiting for God's Kingdom

Jesus Announces the Kingdom's Arrival

More Resources

timeless ideas and images continue to endure.

In this guide, you can learn about the big picture of Jesus' central teaching and explore related videos, podcast episodes, and more.

The Big Idea

The Sermon on the Mount is the most complete record we have of Jesus' announcement about the arrival of God's Kingdom, promising that God's presence and blessing is available to everyone.

Context

Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount within his larger narrative about Jesus that takes place in Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, and the surrounding occupied lands of the Greco-Roman Empire between approximately 4 B.C.E. and 35 C.E. The book was likely composed sometime between 55 and 90 C.E.

Key Themes

- Renewing the human vision for the “good life”
- Righteousness as right-relating with God and neighbors, including enemies
- Real life in God’s peaceful, generous kingdom

Structure

- The Sermon on the Mount can be divided into three main sections:
- Opening descriptions of the good, blessed ways of life
- The main body of the speech, which describes nature and activity of right-relationships compelled by love
- A conclusion that invites listeners to choose how they will respond

The Literary Design of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is not a random collection of teaching snippets. These are Jesus’ core teachings,

organized intentionally to help readers understand emphasis points and to aid memorization. Readers can identify a tree-part repeated structure to the sermon. It contains three major sections, and the middle section (main body) itself has three parts, and each middle part breaks into three parts, as well.



At the center of the center section, we read the famous prayer Jesus taught his followers with.

Matthew 6:9-10 NASB

9 “Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father, who is in
heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
10 'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

God's Kingdom in the Story of the Bible

So for Jesus, what does it mean for God's Kingdom to come to Earth? To answer, we first remember that Jesus is Jewish and grew up meditating on the Hebrew Bible, the sacred Scriptures of Israel. They told the story of God and his way of life in a heavenly kingdom along with humanity and its ways of life in its own kingdoms on Earth.

God first creates a well-ordered world where the kingdom of God and Earth were one, and he appoints humans to rule on his behalf. When humans rule with God's wisdom and love — that is, when justice and peace prevail, and love compels all to care for one another generously — they are experiencing God's Kingdom and God's will being done here on Earth as it is in Heaven (Genesis 1). But that's no easy task. Humans start building their own

kingdoms, according to their own wisdom (Genesis 3; Genesis 4; Genesis 11).

God's response is to help humanity, and he chooses one family, the people of Israel (Abraham's family), to bring life to every other family on Earth.

Genesis 12:1-8 NASB

12 Now the **LORD** said to Abram,

“Go from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father’s
house,
To the land which I will show
you;

2 And I will make you into a
great nation,

And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing;

3 And I will bless those who
bless you,

And the one who curses you
I will curse.

And in you all the families of
the earth will be
blessed.”

4 So Abram went away as the **LORD** had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. **5** Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the people which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; so they came to the land of Canaan. **6** Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanites were in the land at that time. **7** And the **LORD** appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the **LORD** who had appeared to him. **8** Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the **LORD** and called upon the name of the **LORD**.

God's wisdom for Abraham's family is called the Torah, which in Hebrew, means "teaching" or "instruction." Beginning with Moses on Mount Sinai, God enters into a sacred covenant with them (Exodus 19-20). God chooses this one family to be transformed by God's wisdom so that they can represent God's Kingdom before all the nations (Exodus 19:3-6).

Waiting for God's Kingdom

But in Jesus' day, God's Kingdom is nowhere to be seen. In fact, Israel in the first century is suffering under the thumb of Roman oppressors. So why hadn't God's Kingdom come? Many religious leaders, like the scribes and the Pharisees, thought it wasn't coming because Israel wasn't being faithful enough to the Torah. Other leaders, called the Sadducees, thought it would be best if Israel found a way to cooperate with Rome, and so they became the power brokers of Jesus'

day. Some known as “the zealots” ran for the hills to become freedom fighters against Rome. And still others withdrew to the desert, waiting for God to use them to start a new Israel.

But if you were to walk around the hill country of Israel like Jesus did, you would have mostly found normal people figuring out their lives as best they could. Most were barely hanging on—lots of poor and sick people. Many had lost their land to the Roman occupiers and were struggling to pay the heavy taxes. They are largely feeling powerless and hopeless.

Jesus Announces the Kingdom’s Arrival

So Jesus went to these people, healing the sick and announcing that God’s Kingdom was arriving.

Matthew 4:23-25 NASB

23 Jesus was going about in all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and

healing every disease and every sickness among the people.

24 And the news about Him spread throughout Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and severe pain, demon-possessed, people with epilepsy, and people who were paralyzed; and He healed them. **25** Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

People gathered from all over to hear his teachings. And one day, Jesus went up to a hill and said the arrival of God's Kingdom was starting, here and now with them — the powerless and the weak. This is why the very first line of the Sermon on the Mount is:

Matthew 5:3 NASB

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In other words, where can you go and see God's presence and blessing springing to life? Among the rich? Among the powerful? "No!" Jesus says. Look where people are poor, where they feel crushed and defeated. God's Kingdom is beginning with those very people.

More Resources

Resources From BibleProject

- What Is the Sermon on the Mount?
- Sermon on the Mount (Download)
 - BibleProject Scholar
 - Team Translation
 - Video Script
- Intro to the (Watch) (Download)
 - Sermon on
 - the Mount
- Matthew 5-7: (Watch) (Download)
 - Sermon
 - Overview

Book Recommendations From Our Scholarship Team

- Scot McKnight, Sermon on the Mount (The Story of God Bible Commentary)
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship
- Dallas Willard, The Divine Conspiracy

New American Standard Bible (NASB) Copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission All rights reserved worldwide Learn More about New American Standard Bible

Reflection | Living the Upside Down Kingdom

- Jesus began His teaching by describing an upside-down kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. Through parables, He continues to reveal that same kingdom, challenging the values we assume are normal.

- **Take a moment to reflect:**

- Where do you see the values of God's kingdom running against the values of our world?
- Which assumptions about success, power, righteousness, or blessing might Jesus be subverting in your own thinking?
- What might it look like to work within God's kingdom in ways that feel countercultural, quiet, or misunderstood?
- Where might obedience to Jesus require you to trust divine grace over human merit?