

The Parables of Jesus A Kingdom of a Different Kind

Biblical parables are much more than a fictional stories that teach heartwarming life lessons.

For Jesus, the parables are about creating a new human family, a new kind of society around him—people who live by the heartbeat of their Creator and Redeemer (cf. **Matthew 6:9**).

Parables were just one of the ways Jesus used to invite people into the new reality he came to create.

Jesus used parables as an ingenious strategy to announce and bring into reality the reign and rule of God on earth among a new kind of people. Part of that genius is how parables also serve to critique those who reject him as King.

By using parables, Jesus is saying, *“This moment that we are in is exactly like the moment the Hebrew prophets were in.”*

Parables reveal truth to those who believe Jesus and submit to his rule. At the same time, they conceal truth from those who refuse to do so.

N.T. Wright: *“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 are expressions of Jesus’ shocking announcement that God’s Kingdom was arriving on earth as in heaven.” Simply Jesus, pp. 87-88.*

Instead of reading a parable and asking, *“How is this parable about me and my relationship to God?”* We should reverse it and ask, *“How is this parable about Jesus and how he is inaugurating God’s Kingdom on earth?”*

Jesus’ parables reveal the nature of God’s Kingdom.

For those with open their hearts to him, the parables reveal a treasure about God’s eternal Kingdom that is worth giving up anything in this world to have (e.g., **Phil. 3:8**).

For those “spiritually calcified” by persistent disbelief and disobedience, Christ’s parables serves only to increase their blindness and deafness.

THE PARABLES CONCEAL THE TRUTH. Matthew 13:11–15

Key word in **12:46** - *“outside.”* Jesus’ biological family was standing *“outside”*.

To those inside, *“the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven”* are given. To those *“outside”* (**Mark 4:11**), they are not.

Matthew 13:12–15: *For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.”*

Matthew 12:50 “whoever will may come”

Jesus identifies the source of the problem, which is bad soil—human hardness, shallowness, and self-indulgence. (cp. **Romans 1:24, 26, 28** - *“God gives them up”*)

C. S. Lewis: *There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, “Thy will be done.”* The secrets of the Kingdom are revealed to those on the inside, but for those

who stubbornly remain on the outside, they remain concealed.

THE PARABLES REVEAL THE TRUTH. Matthew 13:16-17

“Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

Parables unveil what Jesus calls “the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven.” (cp. **v. 11, 34-35**; cf. **John 15:15**), which concern the rule of God on earth inaugurated in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

“The secrets of the Kingdom of heaven” parallel “the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19; cf. 1:9; 3:1-10; 5:32; Romans 16:25-27) and “the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God.” (Ephesians 3:9)

THE insight of the ages - **Ephesians 1:7-10** *In Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his eternal purpose, which he, the Triune God, planned and covenanted together before the creation of the world, that in the fullness of time, all things in heaven and on earth will be united in Jesus Christ!*

What was once hidden to the world, and still remains hidden to stubborn unbelief, God has now revealed to a tax collector, a few fishermen, two sons of thunder, and anyone else who humbles themselves to place their faith in Christ as Savior and submit to him as Lord.

Jesus’ parables justly conceal and graciously reveal.

APPLICATION

For those who find themselves on the “outside”

Ask, seek, knock (**Matthew 7:7**). Jesus will open the door of the Kingdom to you.

2 Pet. 3:9 *God is not willing that any should perish.*

But God also gives us the terrible freedom to sin and refuse his love and grace, and if we do so with a stubborn, recalcitrant heart, there is a point when he will say, *“Enough. Have it your way. Thy will be done.”*

For those who know they are on the “Inside”

Gratitude for the gift of seeing, hearing and believing (**vv. 11-12**; cp. **Ephesians 2:8-9**).

Romans 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (cf. Ephesians 1:11-12).*

Give what you have received. **Matthew 13:51, 52**
“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Freely, we have received. Now, freely, we can give.