

JESUS TEACHES IN PARABLES

Matthew 13; Mk 4:1-25

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Jesus

Key-location: Capernaum

Key-repetitions:

- Parables: Jesus told many parables (Mt 13:1-53).

Key-attitudes:

- The serenity and magnetism of Jesus, the storyteller, when he told parables.
- The appeal of the parables to the crowds.
- The authority of Jesus.

Initial-situation:

During the second year of Jesus' ministry, his

popularity with the people grew; however, religious leaders began criticizing him. He selected twelve disciples and taught them during the Sermon on the Mount. They left the mountainside and went to the city of Capernaum where Jesus continued his ministry.

Initial-problem:

The crowd that gathered to hear Jesus was so large that he entered a boat to speak while all the people stood on the shore.

Final-situation:

Jesus was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything to them.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus Taught in Parables Mt 13:1-53; Mk 4:1-25

Jesus went out of the house where he was staying and sat by Lake Galilee. The crowd that gathered was so large that he entered a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. He told them many stories called parables (Mt 13:1-3).

Parable of the Sower

Jesus told the parable, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; the birds ate it. Some fell on rocky places where there was little soil. It sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. When the sun came up, the plants withered just as quickly because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns which grew up and choked the plants. Some seed fell on good soil where it produced plants that bore grain: some a hundred grains, others sixty and others thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear" (Mt 13:3-8).

Later, when Jesus was alone with his disciples, he told them, "Listen to the explanation of the parable of the sower: The seed that fell along the path is the person who hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it; then the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. The seed that fell on rocky places is the person who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But it does not grow deep roots, it lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The seed that fell among the thorns is the person who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, and he doesn't bear fruit. But the seed that fell on good soil is the person who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding one hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Mt 13:19-23).

Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat Field

Jesus told another parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer who sowed good seed in his wheat field. One night while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat field and slipped away before dawn. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also showed up.

"The owner's hired men came to him and said, 'Sir, it was good seed you sowed in your field; where then did the weeds come from?'

"The farmer replied, 'An enemy did this.'

"The hired men asked, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"The farmer answered, 'No, because while you are pulling the weeds, you might root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until harvest time. Then I will instruct the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn'" (Mt 13:24-30).

Later, when Jesus was in a house with his disciples, they requested, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

Jesus answered, "The farmer who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people who belong to the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the final event in history. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will weed out of his Kingdom all those who cause people to sin and all others who do evil. The angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where they will weep and gnash their teeth. Then God's people will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. He who has ears, let him hear" (Mt 13:36-43).

Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

Jesus told another parable, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest garden plant and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and nest in its branches" (Mt 13:31-32). In Jesus' time, the mustard was the smallest seed that farmers planted.

Jesus told another parable, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast that a woman mixed into a large amount of flour until the whole batch of dough rose" (Mt 13:33).

Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he covered it again. The finder was ecstatic; he went and sold all he had and bought that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he immediately sold everything he had and bought it (Mt 13:44-46).

Jesus told all these parables to the crowd. He would not say a thing to them without telling a parable (Mt 13:34-35). With many other parables like these, Jesus spoke to them, fitting the stories to their level of understanding. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything (Mk 4:33-34).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Jesus use storytelling in his teaching?
2. What were some of the stories that Jesus told?
3. Which story most speaks to you?
4. What do these parables have in common?
5. How can you use stories to communicate divine truths?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. Storytelling is an effective means of communicating God's Word. Jesus used storytelling as the primary means of teaching (Mt 13:1-3). Jesus was never without a story when he spoke. He would not say a thing to the crowd without telling a parable (Mt 13:33-35).
2. The parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1-20) teaches that only the person who receives the Word has the ability to prevent its growth. People obstruct the growth of God's Kingdom when they do not allow the Word of God to have spontaneous growth in their life.
3. The parable of the Wheat and Weeds (Mt 13:24-30) teaches that on the day of the final judgment, God will separate his true people from those who pretend to be his servants. The pretenders deceive many; however, they will be destroyed while God's true servants will continue to be in his presence.
4. The work of God often begins small, but has great growth capacity. The parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31-32) reveals that the Kingdom of God has a small and humble beginning, but it grows fast. In Jesus' time, the mustard seed was the smallest seed a farmer used.
5. The parable of the Yeast teaches that a small presence of God's Kingdom will grow and produce great results. Just as yeast is a minor ingredient, it permeates the whole loaf (Mt 13:33).
6. The Kingdom of God is of incomparable value. The parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl of Great Value (Mt 13:44-46) teaches that the Kingdom of God is worth more than everything else that a person possesses. It is necessary that a person be willing to give up everything for love of that treasure.