

Stories of the Kingdom
Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35
Parables Series #1
January 8, 2022

Introduction

- Stories are incredible!
 - Remember: Memory Games documentary – The “story” method
 - Emotion: Story songs like Travelin’ Soldier or The World Turns
 - Action: *Hey I want to try that!*

Klyne Snodgrass Nothing is so attractive or so compelling as a good story. Children (and adults) do not say, “Tell me some facts”; they want a story. Stories are inherently interesting. Discourse we tolerate; to story we attend. Story entertains, informs, involves, motivates, authenticates, and mirrors existence.

****The parables of Jesus****

Klyne Snodgrass Jesus’ parables are among the best known and most influential stories in the world. Even if people know nothing of Jesus, they either know about his stories or have encountered their impact in expressions like “prodigal” or “good Samaritan.” The importance of the parables of Jesus can hardly be overestimated.

Four Questions for Today: 1) What is a parable?, 2) Why did Jesus use parables? 3) What were Jesus’ parables about? 4) Why study Jesus’ parables?

I. What is a Parable?

- Famously hard to define | Blomberg’s 1st 2 chapters are on this debate!
- More than illustration, less than allegory
 - Luke 4:32 “No doubt you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Doctor, heal yourself.’”
 - Hebrew *Masham* - short, even dark saying to get attention
 - Allegory is longer, and most elements have some other meaning | Pilgrims Progress
- Normal, but exaggerated
 - Normal: a farmer planted some seeds and then waited for them to grow
 - Exaggerated: woman throwing a party finding a coin, shrewd steward
 - *NOTE: not as unusual as a fable, e.g. no talking animals
- Some are simple, others complex
 - Simple: yeast in some dough
 - Complex: the lost son has multiple plot points, a twist ending

Lots of examples of parables in the Bible.

*Most famous Old Testament is Nathan with David re: Bathsheba
But nobody comes close to the amount that Jesus did. Constant!*

Always With Parables

Matthew 13 ³⁴ Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables, and he did not tell them anything without a parable, ³⁵ so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: I will open my mouth in parables; I will declare things kept secret from the foundation of the world.

II. Why Did Jesus Use Parables?

Matthew 13 ¹⁰ Then the disciples came up and asked him, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?” ¹¹ He answered, “Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them. ¹² For whoever has, more will be given to him, and he will have more than enough; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. ¹³ That is why I speak to them in parables, because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand. ¹⁴ Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: ‘You will listen and listen, but never understand; you will look and look, but never perceive. ¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown callous; their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back—and I would heal them.’ ¹⁶ Blessed are your eyes because they do see, and your ears because they do hear. ¹⁷ For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see the things you see but didn’t see them, to hear the things you hear but didn’t hear them.”

1. To create intrigue (asking questions)
2. To reveal true disciples (you’re blessed...you actually “get it”)
3. To disarm objections (indirect communication vs. hard hearts, blind eyes, and deaf ears)
 - a. Telling stories to effect change | Biden in 2012, cited Will and Grace

III. What Are Jesus’ Parables About?

- Easy answer: The Kingdom of God
- Matthew is sometimes called The King Jesus Gospel

Stories of the Kingdom

Matthew 13 ¹⁰ Then the disciples came up and asked him, “Why are you speaking to them in parables?” ¹¹ He answered, “Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them...²⁴ He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field...³¹ He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field...⁴⁴ The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied...⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls...⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea...⁵² “Therefore,” he said to them, “every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom treasures new and old.”

Imagine the Kingdom

- In the beginning | God’s wise rule (shared dominion with humans)
- Human rebellion | Abdicating position

- Promised blessing | God's universal rule (Abraham, all nations)
- Chosen people | God's direct rule (Moses, Torah, promised land...but failure and exile)
- Promised Messiah | God's chosen king

***At this time in Israel's history, the imaginations of the people were fixated on kicking out the Romans, and restoring Israel to her previous glory. The Kingdom of God is coming! A narrow, political vision.*

Spiritual Kingdom

Luke 17 ²⁰ When he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with something observable; ²¹ no one will say, 'See here!' or 'There!' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

- Jesus says, "it's me" and everyone who is united to him by faith

Jesus the King

- The King of Israel (recapitulation, perfect life, teaching, miracles)
- The suffering King (betrayal, crucifixion, death, burial)
- The victorious King (raised imperishable)
- The universal King (ascended to heaven)

N.T. Wright Parables, then, aren't simply nice, friendly illustrations designed to help people get their minds round deep abstract truth. In fact, the truth they speak of isn't abstract at all: it's what God is doing personally, bodily, in Jesus and his work, and what God will do through his death and resurrection. God is indeed sowing Israel again, planting his people once more, through Jesus. But it doesn't look like what most people were expecting.

(big idea) What would it look like if Jesus were in charge of everything? **(ask this every week!!)**

- *It would be kind of like a farmer...a father...some young women...*

IV. Why Study the Parables?

Answer: we are living in a new world. Being a faithful follower of Jesus is more challenging.

- Conversation with Grandpa Barry (87)
- Nonverts: The Making of Ex-Christian America by Stephen Bullivant
- Harbor conference in October 2022

Harbor Network Conviction + imagination. We anchor ourselves in the historic faith and also imagine fresh expressions of the kingdom for our particular cultural moment. Our leaders believe that theological clarity gives us the conviction and courage for imagination.

(big idea) Each generation of Christians must imagine afresh how to live as citizens of the kingdom

- Not just spirituality, but: money, parenting, politics, sexuality, business