

Why did Jesus use parables?

By

Vera Zwiers

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When a crowd of people listened to Jesus, Jesus used a lot of parables. But why? Could He not better explain things clearly?

What are parables?

First it is good to know what parables are. You can see Jesus' parables as fictional stories with a hidden lesson. The stories Jesus told the people, you can see and recognize in everyday life. They were about farming, justice, greed and love, for example. Most of the time these were simple stories containing eternal truths.

Also, parables are comparisons or metaphors of something else. For example, the Bible warns about the day when the Lord is coming that it will come like a thief in the night:

“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief

was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:42-44).

You should not take this literally, it's meant figuratively. Thieves are always coming into your house unannounced and unexpectedly. Also “the day when the Lord will come” is unannounced and unexpected. This deeper meaning you have to ponder and grasp for yourself to understand it.

But why...?

All the parables Jesus uses, teach us a lesson or a truth. Many people in His days didn't know the meaning of His parables. His disciples asked Him the same question in Matthew 13:

“Then the disciples came and said to Him, Why do you speak to them in parables? And He answered them: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 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” (Matthew 13:10-13).

So, Jesus wants to teach the secrets of the kingdom of heaven in parables, because the stories He told are only for people who believe in Him and want to listen to Him. At the time Jesus was preaching to the crowd, there were also people in their midst who didn't want to listen and thus didn't want to receive His words.

Jesus didn't want those people to let everyone know that he did miracles. Perhaps it also wasn't time to understand His works yet, because they would not open their ears.

Are the lessons also for us?

It is wonderful how God teaches us lessons through the everyday. The stories Jesus told in the past are still understandable and are likely recognizable for every culture that lives today.

For instance, Jesus told a lot of parables about nature: the parable of the mustard seed, the sheep and the goats, the fig tree, the vineyard, the growing seed etc. There is a parable about a wedding feast too.

These subjects are also relevant for the present day. In this way, the story can come close to you personally and into your culture. Stories are not easily forgotten. Storytelling reminds tellers and listeners of the profound truths and lessons. It is a blessing for those with willing ears. Words of God, regardless how easily told, are capable of touching the hearts of believers.

How can we understand them?

The meaning of a story is a more difficult matter than the story itself. Some parables of Jesus are already explained in the Bible (at first to His disciples and now to us). Others are not. It is good to study them, talk about them with other Christians and pray to God for understanding. He shall teach you whatever you need to know about His kingdom.

Earthly story, with a heavenly meaning

Parables are stories about the things you can see around you, but with a different, more complicated meaning, speaking to your imagination and encouraging you to deepen your understanding. The parables are for those who have ears focused to listen to Him. When you believe in Him, more truth will be revealed to you.

“But 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” (Matthew 13:16-17).

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Vera Zwiers · <https://www.biblword.net/> · info@biblword.net