

Welcome back! Pastor Gerber here again. Today we'll be talking about the Parables of Jesus.

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And these parables make up about 1/3 of Jesus' teachings. There's only 1 gospel account that doesn't have any parables in it. Can you guess which one it is? Remember, there are 3 gospels that are very similar in content and 1 that's very different. The 3 gospels that are similar are called the synoptic gospels. The 3 synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The gospel that is different in many ways, one of those ways is that it doesn't have any parables, is the Gospel of John. Jesus tells about 40 parables throughout the gospels.

So, why did Jesus use Parables?

They helped make hard spiritual truths concrete and understandable. You might notice this with a sermon on Sunday morning. A pastor might be preaching something and everything seems very abstract and hard to understand. But then he'll add in a story. That story will suddenly make everything come together in your mind and all of the sudden, everything makes sense.

Speaking of stories, these parables were interesting and told a story. People remember stories better than lectures. In Jesus' day, most people couldn't read or write. But they were taught with stories from the very beginning. We are no different. Well, we can read and write. But we are all suckers for a good story. And the best stories aren't just about the story themselves. They are about something bigger. Some global truth. Now, the author of that story could have just said: Forgive your enemies. But what if they wrote a story where a man comes in and murders a bunch of school children. Everyone's angry, but one person, a parent of one of the murdered children, publicly forgives that murderer. And then you start to see other parents whose hearts soften. And you see the power that forgiveness has. That makes a much bigger impact than just saying: Forgive your enemies, doesn't it?

Also, these parables start with where people are at now. Jesus is talking to a bunch of farmers, so he uses a farming story. He actually sucks people into his stories because, as they are listening, they are thinking: "Yeah, that's me!" or "Man, I can relate to that guy." And then Jesus uses that to really drive home his point.

These parables don't give an easy answer, but make the hearer think. Not only do these parables not give easy answers, but, often, they don't give answers at all. They make you think. What is this saying about my life? Or what is this saying about the Kingdom of heaven? Or what is this saying about who God is?

And finally, parables make one big point. They aren't a 3 point sermon. They don't have bullet points. They make one point. Now, this point could have different effects on different people. But it's still only one point.

There are some common themes among the parables that Jesus taught with. They are: forgiveness, being ready for the end times, the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God, God's unconditional love, loving others, and how to pray.

Let's take a quick look at some of Jesus' most well-known parables. After this session, please choose at least 3 parables and read through them. See if you come up with the same main point that we did.

The parable of the wise and foolish builders teaches us to build our lives on a solid foundation.

The parable of the sower and the seeds teaches us to share God's Word and He will take care of the rest.

The parable of the lost sheep teaches us that God comes to find us when we are lost.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard teaches us that God's grace isn't always fair. And I just want to point out that this is a good thing. If God's grace and his judgement were fair, we would all be going to Hell! We really want, no, we really *need* an unfair God.

The parable of the wedding banquet teaches us that God invites all into heaven, but many make excuses.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches us to be prepared, because we never know when Jesus is coming back.

The parable of the talents teaches us to use what God gives us.

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that all people are our neighbors.

The parable of the rich fool teaches us that the love of money will keep us from God.

The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that God always welcomes us back, no matter what we've done. I know that this parable has often been titled the 'Prodigal Son,' but I don't like that title. And I'll tell you why. The definition of 'prodigal' is 'wastefully extravagant.' And this fits the son quite well in this story. But it also describes the father. He gives this son his inheritance. And then, when the son comes back, the father throws a huge party and promises the son another inheritance. This is how God treats us. When we stray from him, He doesn't just welcome us back, He throws a huge party to welcome us back! And the inheritance that He is giving us? Huge. A place in the kingdom of heaven. An eternity on the new earth when Jesus returns and makes all things new. Good times. Good times.

The parable of the persistent widow teaches us to keep praying until we get an answer.

And the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector teaches us that God loves those who are humble.

The main point here is that God's love is unconditional.

Remember, I would like you to choose at least 3 of these parables and read through them.

That's all for today. As always, let me know if you have any questions. See you next time!