

PARABLES 101

Matthew 13:1-3

September 14, 2008 Sunday p.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. Jesus often used parables in his preaching and teaching-13:1-3.
- B. Its been estimated that parables make up one third of Jesus' recorded teachings.
- C. Today we begin a study of some of these parables with an introduction to "Parables 101".

I. WHAT IS A PARABLE?

- A. What does the word mean?
 - 1. It's a transliteration of the Greek word "parabole" (para-bow-lay).
 - 2. It means "to place beside".
 - 3. The idea is to place one thing beside another for a comparison.
 - 4. A parable is usually introduced with the word "like"—13:31, 33.
- B. Where do parables come from?
 - 1. They are usually stories drawn from nature (i.e. mustard seed) or human circumstances (Good Samaritan).
 - 2. A common definition is they are a "earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

II. WHY DID JESUS USE PARABLES?

- A. To conceal truth from some people.
 - 1. Why? Because of the hardness of their hearts—13:10-17.
 - 2. This separated the truth-seekers from the curiosity-seekers.
 - 3. They also kept his critics and enemies confused.
- B. Another reason was to reveal truth to those who wanted to know it—13:34-36.

III. WHAT ARE PARABLES ABOUT?

- A. The general theme is "the Kingdom of God"—13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45 & 47 (more about this kingdom next week).
- B. There are also three sub-themes...
 - 1. The character of the Kingdom.
 - a. Mustard seed.
 - b. Leaven.
 - c. Hidden treasure.
 - d. Pearl of Great Price.
 - 2. The character of the King.
 - a. Workers in the Vineyard.
 - b. The Lost Son.
 - 3. The character of the King's Subjects.
 - a. The Good Samaritan.
 - b. The Persistent Widow.

IV. HOW SHOULD PARABLES BE INTERPRETED?

- A. First, two extremes should be avoided.
 - 1. One, seeing spiritual truth in every detail. This is allegory and it destroys the purpose of parables.
 - 2. Two, saying there is only one spiritual truth for each parable.
- B. Second, there are some general guidelines to follow.
 - 1. Learn from Jesus' other parables-Mark 4:13.
Mark 4:13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"
 - 2. Look for the "Central Truth" and be sure any secondary truths are in harmony with this one.
 - 3. Look at the context of the parable (The before and after).

CONCLUSION

- A. Let's decide to be truth-seekers in our study of parables.
- B. Let's ask God to help us understand the heavenly meanings of these earthly stories.