

The Purpose of Parables

By Mary Kane



When my boys were little, I loved to read them stories. At the end of a busy day we'd gather up a group of family favorites, pile up the pillows on our bed and read them together. Due to their diverse giftings and personalities, my boys had very different tastes in reading materials. My youngest son, Scottie, usually chose books that had a flowing combination of rhythm, tempo and rhyming words such as *I Can't Said the Ant*, *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* or *Mr. Brown Can Moo*. He would often say "Mommy, sing me this book." My oldest son, Erik, however, choose books that contained facts and information such as books by Richard Scary and Bill Nye the Science Guy and *The Magic School Bus* series. I loved reading stories to my little boys, and I often reminisce about those special days. Now I look forward to the days when I'll be able to gather my grandchildren close, snuggle them on my lap and read to them.

Jesus also liked to tell stories called parables. He used parables to teach His loved ones about Himself and His kingdom. How He loves to draw us close in order to tell us His story!

Please pause a moment to ask your Holy Father to cleanse your heart from all unrighteousness and to fill you afresh with his Holy Spirit.

Now please read Matthew 13:10-17.

If you have section headings in your Bible, what heading is given before verse 10?

The NKJV reads *The Purpose of Parables*. That brings us to the focus of this series of Bible studies which is (1) to learn why Jesus used parables and (2) to learn the concepts that Jesus presented for the benefit of all believers.

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, the word *parable* signifies the placing of two or more objects together, usually for the purpose of a comparison...in a more usual and technical sense of the word, “parable” ordinarily signifies an imaginary story, yet one that in its details could actually have transpired, the purpose of the story being to illustrate or inculcate some higher spiritual truth.” Jesus began using parables during the second year of His ministry on earth.

What question did the apostles ask Jesus in verse 10?

What was Jesus’ answer (verse 11)?



While this answer may seem harsh to us, we need to consider what Jesus was really saying. I will try to illustrate this point with an example from my own life. Before I became a Christian, I would try to read my Bible, but I could not understand what the scriptures were saying; it was as if the text were written in a foreign language that I could not decipher. I could not understand the scriptures because unbelievers are missing the One who opens the eyes of our hearts—the Holy Spirit! Therefore, the opening of the scriptures has not been given to unbelievers but to believers. I will never forget opening my Bible that evening of the day I became a Christian; it was as if the scales had fallen from my eyes and heart, and I could understand the Holy Word of God! Miraculous! I am in awe of that experience to this day. That memory has been an anchor to me at times when the enemy has come to try and make me doubt the reality of my conversion and faith in my Jesus.

Now please fill in the missing words from verse 12:

“For whoever _____ to him _____ will be given, and he will have _____.”

The NKJV reads:

“For whoever *has* to him *more* will be given, and he will have *abundance*.”

At first, when I read this verse, I must confess that the word *has* bothered me. It seemed a little unfair that someone who has something will receive more, when those who have very little will have even that small amount taken from them. In order to gain some insight we must look at the original language.

The original Greek word used for *has* in this text is *echo*, which among other things means “to have, to hold, to hold one's self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to, to be closely joined to a person or a thing” (BLB). So it's not that you just *have* something in your possession but that you accept it, live your life by it and continue to actively believe it for your own.

What will happen when we keep and use what God has given us (verse 12)?

We will have in “abundance”! So the key to learning about God is to learn about God! The more we learn about Him the more we will be blessed by what we learn, therefore the more we will want to learn!



Matthew Henry comments, “This reason is further illustrated by the rule God observes in dispensing his gifts; he bestows them on those who improve them, but takes them away from those who bury them” (BLB). In addition, He likens this principle to the process of investing; we place our money in the hands of a trustworthy financier who will in turn take our money, invest it and make more money. How silly it would be to bury our money in the backyard where it will only lose value! God is in the investment business as well! He invests His gifts in us hoping we will produce abundant dividends for His kingdom.

Please read verse 13 again.

Name three things from this verse that unbelievers won't do:

First, they are unable to *see*. The word used for see in this text means to "physically be able see with the eye and to see with the *mind's eye*" (BLB, emphasis mine).

Second, they are unable to *hear*. The Greek word used for hearing in this verse is *akouo* which means "to be endowed with the faculty of hearing and to perceive, understand and to comprehend." There is a difference then in hearing versus hearing and understanding.

Third, they are unable to *understand*. *Syniemi* is the transliteration for the original Greek word used for *understand*. It means to set or bring together, to join together in the mind. One of the roots of *syniemi* is a "primary preposition denoting union" (BLB). When our hearts are joined with the information in our minds, and we accept what we have heard as truth, we enter into *union* with Jesus!

You see, the kingdom of God is not something we will find with our usual senses; we will not physically see it or hear it with our ears and eyes—it will require faith! The kingdom of God is spiritually discerned with the *ears and eyes of our heart*.

Based on the last line in verse 15, what will God do for those who understand in their hearts and turn to Him?

He will heal us! Does anyone need a little healing in her life? I know I do!

What do you need God to heal for you?

Please pause a moment and let me prayer for you.

Dearest Holy Father,

Please help my brothers and sisters in Christ. We have wounds that only You know about; wounds that only You can heal. Please help us to turn to You and bring all our hurts for You to deal with.

In the Name of Jesus,

Amen.

Please reread verse 16 and record what we *are* according to this verse.

Now please read verse 17.

Why are we blessed?

First, we are blessed because we are no longer blind and have the wonderful gift of salvation. Second, we are blessed above the great prophets and righteous men and women of the Old Testament because we are part of the unfolding of the Good News of the Gospel! I have no greater satisfaction in my life than doing the work He laid out for me to accomplish before He established the foundation of the earth. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown state "Not only were the disciples blessed above the blinded just spoken of, but favored above the most honored and the best that lived under the old economy, who had but glimpses of the things of the new kingdom, just sufficient to kindle in them desires not to be fulfilled to any in their day."

In closing, please write a prayer to God, praising Him for all the many ways He has blessed you since you became His child.

You are greatly loved!

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