

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

October 20, 2019

“Parables and Principles”

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Church Fellowship Sunday, November 3, 9:15-10:15am

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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- 1) Is there a difference between seeking an emotional high in worship and seeking an exciting secret message hidden in the Bible?
- 2) What drives us to see allegory in the Bible?
- 3) What was Jesus' main point in His Parable of the Sower?

Matthew uses the Greek word _____, παραβολή (pä-řä-bö-lā), 12 times in this chapter, and only 5 other times in the rest of his Gospel. What is a parable? It is literally to _____ alongside.

1) Parables are employed to help people _____ the concept, not to obscure it.

2) A parable is _____ a simile, metaphor, fable, or allegory. An Allegory, ἀλληγορία (äl-lā-gö-rē-ä), is where the true meaning of the content is hidden in a contrived story, where each element symbolically stands for something else. It was to hide the meaning from all, but those in the know.

Parables are generally focused on _____ important point of comparison and they are intended to enlighten, rather than to _____.

II Samuel 12:1-7 ~ ^{1NASB}Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, “There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. ²“The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. ³“But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him. ⁴“Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” ⁵Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. ⁶“He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.” ⁷Nathan then said to David, “You are the man!”

Was Nathan interested in anyone dissecting his parable and discerning what each thing stood for symbolically?

Next, Jesus was not a humanist philosopher. His parables must be grounded in the context of His person and His _____.

Finally, the context. What is the context of the Parable of the Sower?

Every human being is either child of Satan, or they are a child of God. Yet, there seems to be a transitional phase. Weren’t the people Jesus was talking to in various states of acceptance?

MATTHEW 13:1-3a ~ ^{1NASB}That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. ^{3a}And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying...

The opening closely ties to the previous chapter. Matthew 12:50, "Whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." Notice, the implication... There are people in that category and there are those _____... Period.

"Do the will of God." If we're not the people ignoring it, we are the people making it about personal _____. It may be natural, but it's not God.

To "Do the will of God," is to be His child, which is to whole-heartedly accept the Father's proffered means of right _____ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, actively follow Jesus as His disciple.

As a new creation in Christ, the Christian has a totally _____ foundation or life force. We are not in very good contact with that new basis, because we are used to being _____, not alive. And we are still surrounded by a _____ world.

"Be transformed" into who you really are by presenting yourself to the Holy Spirit's work "Renewing of your mind." That's what Romans 12 means. Do not _____ to go through life "Conformed," to who you were without the Holy Spirit... That's no longer you.

Present yourself daily... Hourly...

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Jesus sat in the boat and the Disciples likely followed suit, while the crowd stood on the beach. There is an intentional _____ going on here.

Now Jesus was ready to speak to the whole crowd... Disciples in the boat, famous to infamous. The people on the shore, ranging from people ready to be _____ to people already set against Him and everything in-between.

MATTHEW 13:3b-9 ~ ^{3b}NASB "Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹He who has ears, let him hear."

It is easy to see that Jesus was trying to show all the people there that day that they would each respond to Him. No matter what the individual details turned out to be, the bottom line is there were only _____ kinds of people.

He listed six possible results, three that produced no fruit and three that did. The outcome is never _____.

MATTHEW 13:10 ~ ¹⁰NASB "And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 13a ~ 102019

Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

STORIES
THAT
CHANGED
THE
WORLD

The Parables of Jesus

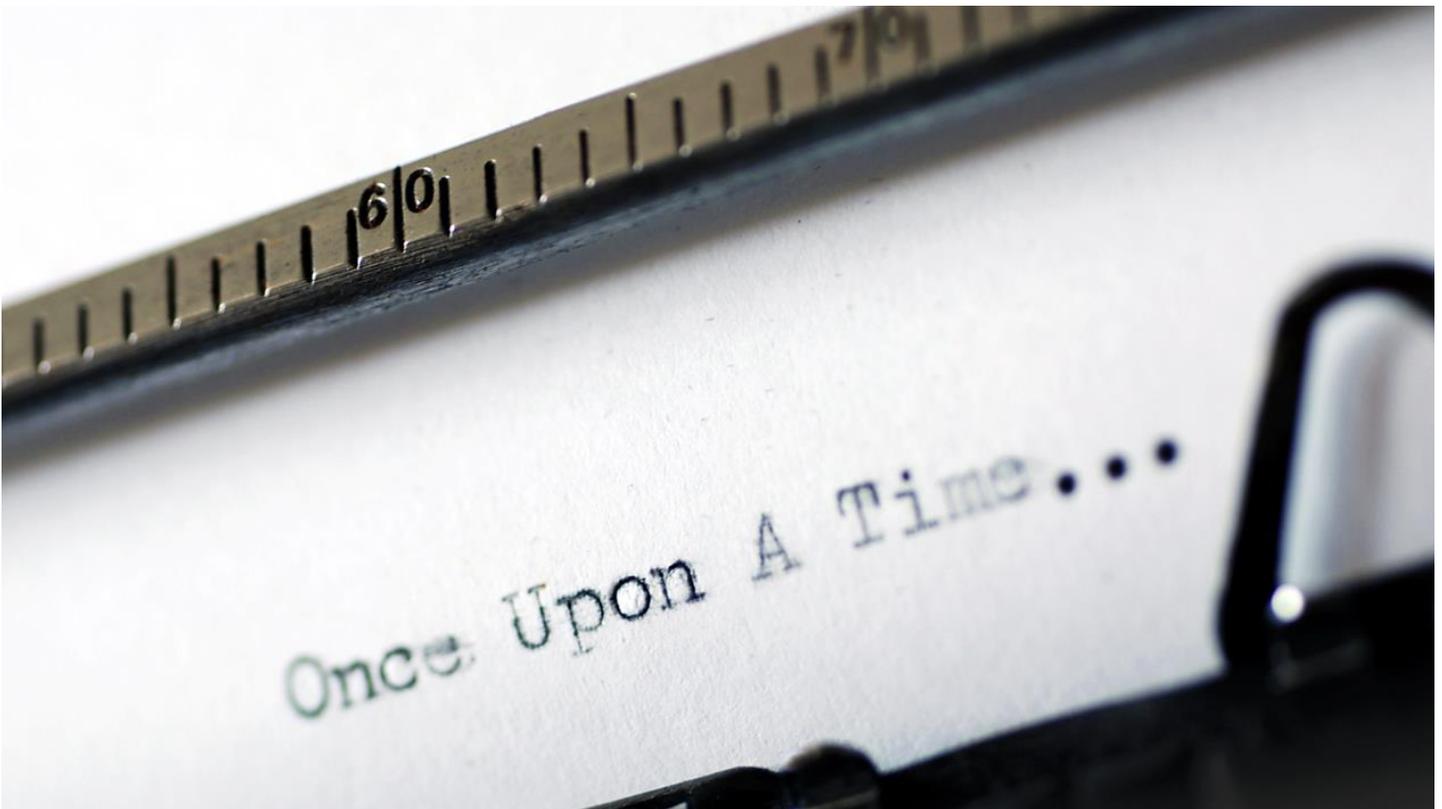
Now we enter one of the most beloved and enjoyable

chapters in Matthew's Gospel. People through the ages have used and abused the seven parables of chapter 13. Fortunately for us it is amazingly well formulated, and the context is crystal clear – so there's no reason to be misled.

It will take a little work though. Because we want to understand Jesus correctly, we need to start with some general information.

Since that's the case, we're not going to fully cover even the first parable today – you may have questions after the sermon – good. We will get to all of them over the next month or so that we are camped in this chapter... Write your questions and ideas down and we'll plan to have some fun together investigating all the possibilities.

Please remember, I'm never up here giving a speech – I'm up here to facilitate mutual learning.



First, from verse 3 through verse 53, Matthew uses the Greek word parable, παραβολή (pä-řä-bö-lā), 12 times. 12 times in one chapter, and only 5 other times in the rest of this 28-chapter Gospel.

That's significant. What is a parable? Search the internet and you'll find that there are a lot of different ideas and most are blatantly wrong. A parable is a special and specific form of Greek rhetoric. It is, as I said, παραβολή (pä-řä-bö-lā), from παρά, as in parallel and βάλλω, "To cast or throw," and so it is literally to cast alongside. It is to set something familiar and easy to understand beside the new thing the speaker wants the audience to grasp.

The entire reason that I use stories is to accomplish the same thing. My purpose is to help you better grasp what I'm teaching by relating it to a story.

So, the first and perhaps most important thing we need to know about parables is they are employed to help people better get the concept, NOT to obscure it. Never to obscure it.

Jesus was not intentionally making it harder for people to understand Him – just the opposite! He was masterfully using rhetoric – parables – to reach the people and help them get onboard with Him... That was His goal.

Second, Jesus had access to a variety of rhetorical devices and He often used them, but here, He chose to explain using parables. A parable is NOT a simile, it's NOT a metaphor, it's NOT a fable, and it is, especially, NOT an allegory.

Similes are similar. "Life is LIKE a box of chocolates." Metaphors are direct statements. "It's raining cats and dogs." Fables are like parables, but the story is purely

fanciful, like the race between the “Tortoise and the hare.”

I’ve talked about the dangers of an allegorical interpretation of the Bible before.

An Allegory is a different type of Greek rhetorical discourse. It is ἀλληγορία (äl-lā-gō-rē-ä) from ἄλλος, meaning “Another,” combined with ἀγορία, “To speak at length in public.” Therefore, public speaking that was not plain, but “Another” way to say it. It is to hide the true meaning of what the speaker is saying in a contrived story, where each element of the story symbolically stands for something else. It was done to give the speaker 1) plausible deniability. As an example, someone could publicly speak against their leader – a death sentence back then – and get away with it if their allegory was clever enough. If they hid their true meaning behind enough symbolism. Many people wrongly think of the Book of Revelation as an attack against Rome veiled in allegorical symbolism. 2) Allegories were also used to hide the meaning from the uninitiated. Only those with the secret decoder ring would understand.

The two biggest differences between a parable and an allegory is that 1) a parable was designed to take ordinary, every-day examples and situations to create plausible, easily understood stories, in order to convey an important point. Parables usually drive and emphasize only one thing the speaker wants people to grasp.

They are dramatic that way – they make an impression and so, the point is memorable if it was a well-designed parable. Jesus formulated excellent parables. So, the first difference is that with a parable the speaker generally wants there to be only one main point of comparison so that the audience doesn't get distracted or lost. 2) Which brings us to the second difference. Parables exist so the people can clearly understand. Where an allegory is meant to hide the meaning, a parable is meant to make it obvious.

The crazy thing... Is the very thing a parable seeks to avoid, is the confusion created by people allegorizing the story... Taking everything symbolically and searching for a deeper meaning. That's what ἀλληγορία is for – a παραβολή is to get people to see and affirm the general point of comparison.

Let me give this example. Turn in your Bibles to, II Samuel 12:1-7, 1NASB Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, “There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. 2“The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. 3“But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him. 4“Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” 5Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. 6“He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.” 7Nathan then said to David, “You are the man!”

Can you see that Nathan was completely uninterested in anyone dissecting his story and discerning what each thing stood for symbolically? Nathan didn’t want David trying to figure out a deeper secret meaning... Nathan’s intention was to illicit in the King the exact

reaction he did and then to show the one point of intended comparison... “You are the man!”

An allegory, on the other hand, is a complex story where several elements stand symbolically for other things. The famous books “Animal Farm,” by George Orwell, “The Great Divorce,” by C.S. Lewis, “Divine Comedy,” by Dante, and most famously, “The Cave,” by Plato are all allegories.

Our problem, and it is a problem that we share with people going back 2,000 years, is we want to turn Jesus’ parables into allegories. It can be fun. It can be informative, and it can even be enlightening, but whatever it is, it is not what Jesus meant.

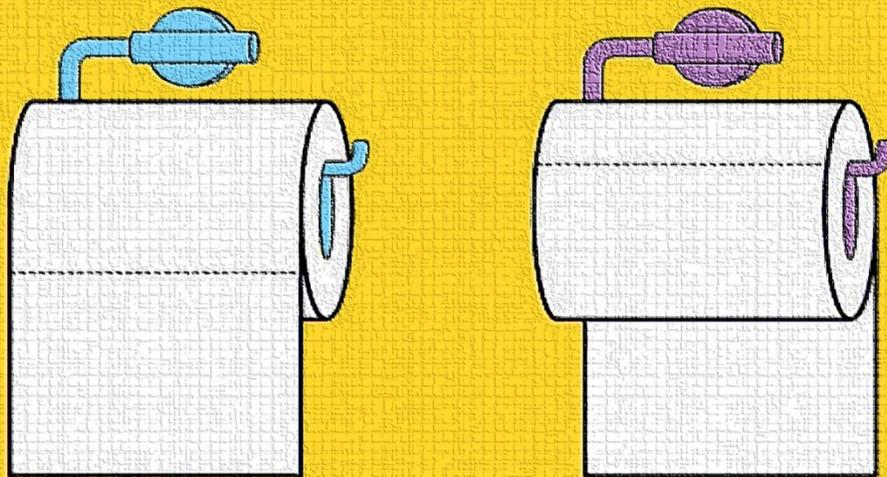
Understand the actual meaning and then carefully add other layers if you want, but always remember that those added layers are yours, not His.

Next, Jesus was not a humanist philosopher. His parables are not intended to give general universal truths so people could glean a moral or ethical lesson. Jesus was “God with us” and His parables must be understood based upon that fact and therefore must be grounded in the context of His life and teaching.

Finally, the context. Not just the context of the Gospel narrative, but the context of the careful organization of the chapter with its 7 parables and of course the formulation of the parables themselves.

2 KINDS OF PEOPLE

A VISUAL COMPATIBILITY QUIZ



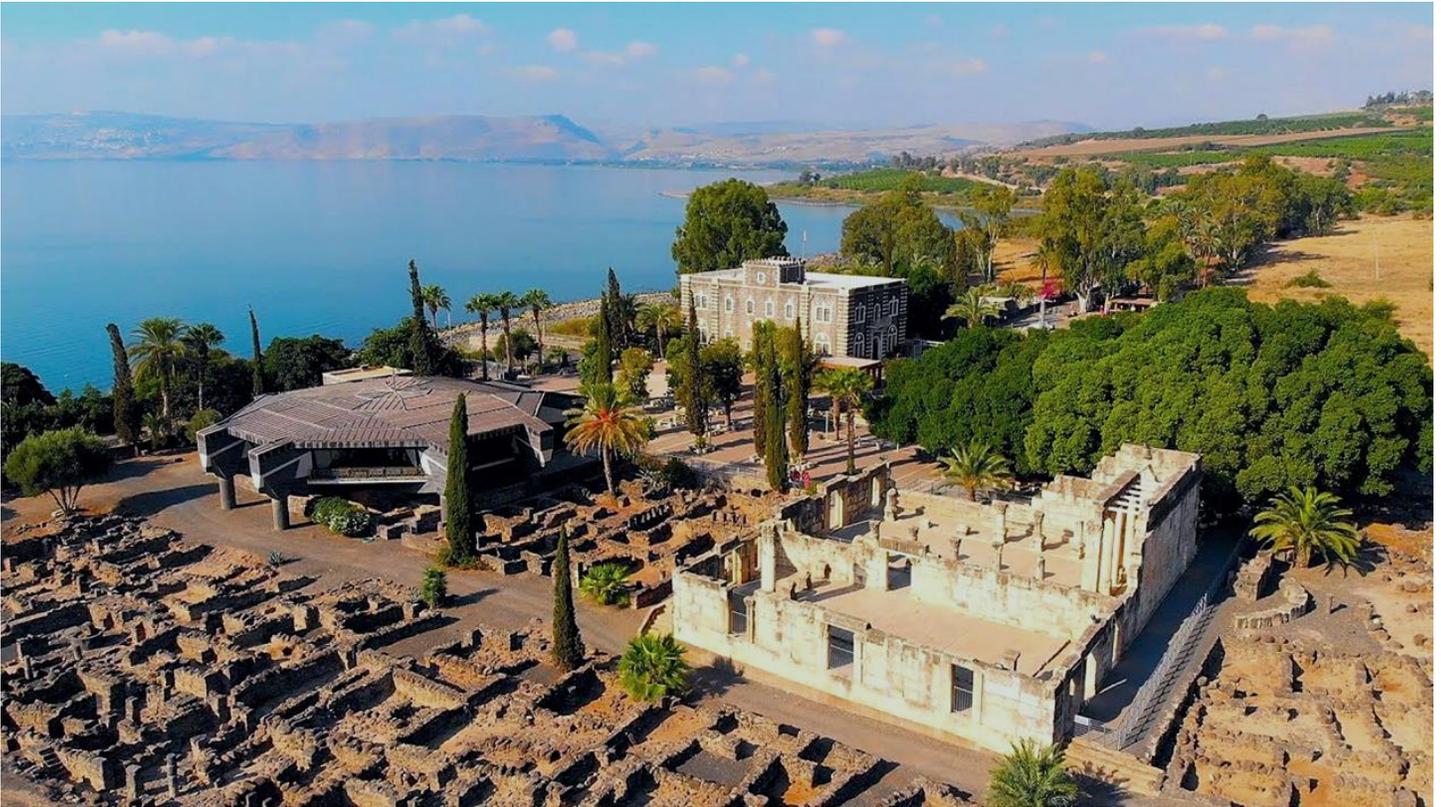
Speaking of context, we recently finished chapter 12, which was an entire chapter devoted to demonstrating that there are only two possible positions. Every human being is either, a card carrying, Mark of the Beast wearing, self-absorbed, child of Satan, or they are a full-fledged, Seal of God branded, Holy Spirit filled, disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There seems to be a transitional phase though. The people Jesus was talking to were in various states of acceptance.

We see that in our experience as well. Rare is the person who has never had a single thought about God, hears the Gospel, and immediately becomes a fully devoted follower of Jesus.

People seem to ooze into the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is about to address that very thing. Since I don't want anyone to have the wrong impression while we are discerning Jesus' meaning, let me just say, that we will find that the one concept, does not negate the other.

Everyone is currently a Christian, or they are not – it turns out that many people who are not – are hanging around Christ. Some will eventually accept, and some will eventually walk away, but both groups are bound for the Lake of Fire while they are shopping.



Matthew 13:1-3a ~ 1NASB That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. 2 And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. 3a And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying...

The house is 80 yards from the beach. From me to the middle of our parking lot is the distance.



How Do We Do God's *Will*?

The opening of this chapter closely ties it to the previous chapter. The context is Matthew 12:50, 50NASB “Whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.” Anyone, everyone, whomsoever, whenever, wherever... Jesus expands the possibility universally as applicable to all people, at all times without any qualification, other than what – what is the one qualification required of any and every person in order to be in the Family? They must “Do the will of God.” Notice quickly, the implication is there are people in that category and there are those outside... And that’s it; no other possibility.

This is such an important point. Here, Jesus is telling us that not only are there just two possible positions, the positions have to do with the whole person inclination, NOT just a simple choice, or philosophical viewpoint, or an agreement with a set of parameters.

So many people think you can believe in God, or even Jesus, and they'll be good to go. So many people think that all that's necessary is an emotionally charged acceptance of Jesus at an altar call and everything will fall into place. Jesus said, "Do the will of God." Do! Act! live out! obey! accomplish! What it is that God wants.

Man, people have a hard time with that concept.

If we're not the people ignoring it, we are the people who immediately make it about our personal performance. Because we do, we also quickly make our approval of others based upon our perception of their performance. It's natural. It's our experience. It's what we know and it's wrong.

It is not God. If God's love were as fickle and self-serving as our love, He would be just as lost as we are.

To “Do the will of God,” is to be His child, which is to whole-heartedly accept His proffered means of right relationship. REPENT! Fully embrace Jesus. Above all, to “Do the will of God,” is to surrender to the Salvation and Lordship of Christ and that means to actively follow Him as His disciple.



What's unique to Christianity is that it isn't about a person manufacturing enough internal fortitude to obey a set of rules, or follow a secret code, or conform to the conduct of the club; it is about being accepted by God into His Own family with the initial pledge of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That Spirit-filled person has been reborn. As a new creation in Christ, the Christian has a totally different foundation – a different life-force, if you will. We are not in very good contact with that new basis, because we are used to being animated by sin's death-force, not Jesus' Life-force. We spent some time being dead and we still exist in a dead world, surrounded by dead things – dead ideas, dead agendas, dead people.

The sanctification process, which is to say the Christian growth to greater maturity – greater self-control – is one in which we actively yield to the power of God in us to conform us to Christ. “Be transformed” into who you really are now by presenting yourself to the Holy Spirit's “Renewing of your mind.”

That is a passive process in which God does the work... Your part is to daily, hourly, intentionally present yourself to Him so that He can help you get in better contact with your new self. That's what Romans 12 means. Do not continue to go through life “Conformed,” to who you were without the Holy Spirit... That's no longer you. It's insane to live like you're dead, when Christ has made you alive!

Actively present yourself for the renewing of your perception so that you are in better conformity with who you are in Christ – who you really are, rather than with who you once were.

For some people, like me, it is easier to graphically see the work of the Holy Spirit, but it is also more difficult, because the death of the old life is so ingrained.

For those who were raised in a Christian home and in the church, it is more difficult to grasp the amazing grace God has bestowed, but it is also easier, because there is far less personal experience with the dead life.

We all have our cross – the point to remember is that reborn people “Do the will of God,” by being reborn people, and they continue to “Do the will of God,” as they grow in their connection to the Christ within them.



You'll remember that Jesus was in the house in Capernaum when His family showed up. They couldn't get near Him for all the people crowding around the house. They, along with the rest of this press of humanity, were all wanting a piece of Jesus for one reason or another, but had been forced to wait, probably impatiently, outside.

Matthew indicated that it was a huge crowd. In Mark's parallel account, he says that it was the biggest crowd yet. Jesus exited the house and was mobbed by the masses. The people who had been waiting, no doubt including Jesus' mom and His brothers, now had a chance to see and hear and possibly touch Him. As He

went down to the shore, they followed closely followed behind Him.

With so many folks crowded onto the small beach, Jesus was basically pressed back to the water's edge and so He got into a boat.

We can be relatively certain that it was one of the boats belonging to the fishing business owned by Peter and John's families. Those two, and the rest of the Disciples, likely got into the boat with Jesus. They pushed out a little way into the water, which would amplify Jesus' voice and make it easy for the whole massive audience to hear Him clearly.

Jesus sat in the boat and the Disciples likely followed suit, while the crowd stood on the beach. There is an intentional differentiation going on here... Those with Jesus and those still standing on the outside. Both here and with the house earlier. The people standing on the outside looking in were sampling Jesus to one degree or another. They were still testing and appraising, we might say today, they were seeking, but they, unlike the Disciples, were not in the Kingdom yet.

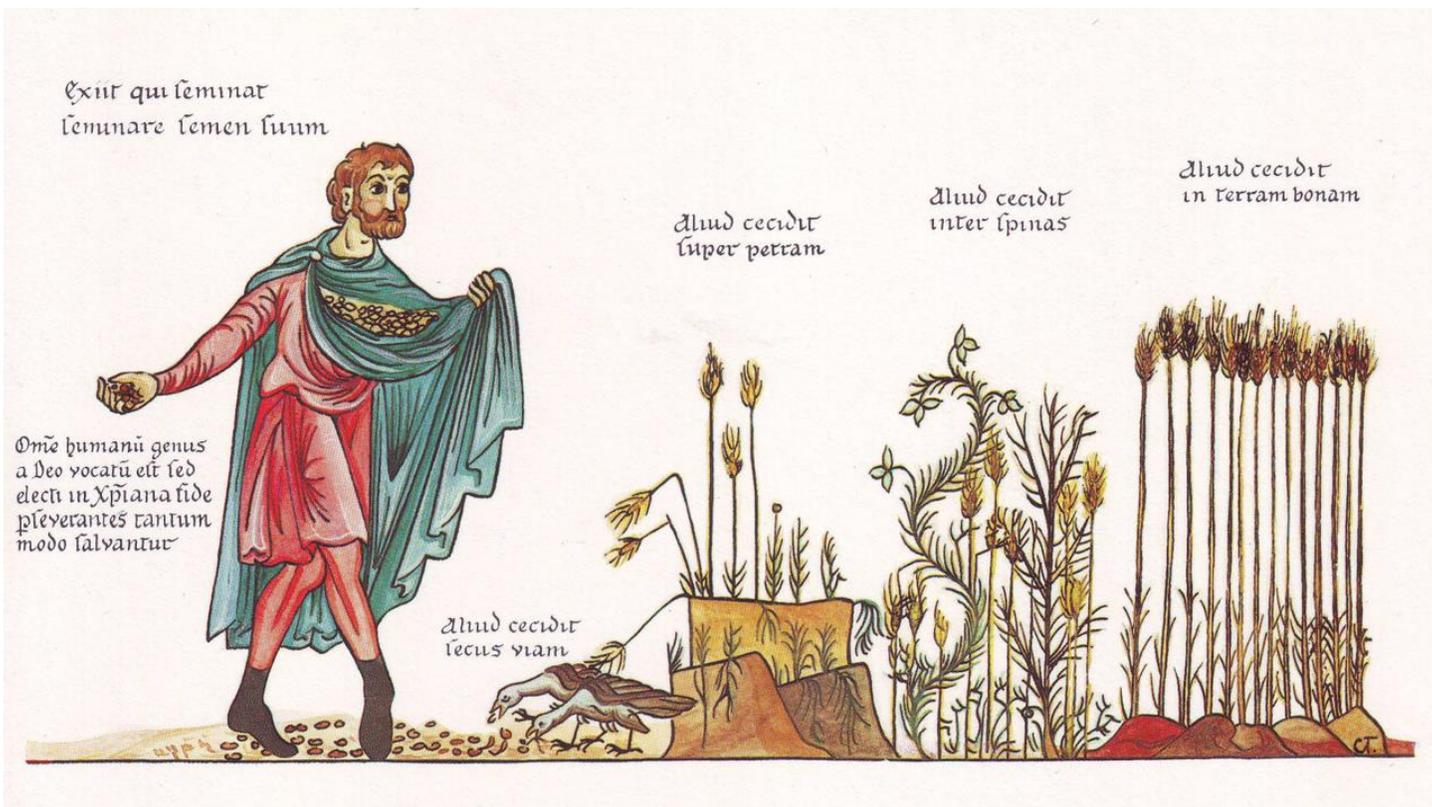


Rob and I found an old school rancher last week. He was like ranchers in Montana used to be before a new generation of... Well, never mind about that. He was happy to let me hunt on His place, once I passed his initial assessment of me. Later we went back to thank him, and he began sizing up both Rob and me. It was basically an evaluation... After 15 minutes or more, he relaxed and began showing us around his place... He had made up his mind about us and we became friends.

Until he was ready to accept us, he was standing outside of our program even though we were welcoming the whole time.



Now Jesus was ready to speak to the whole crowd... Think about that for a moment. He was going to address everyone. The Disciples in the boat, famous to infamous. The people on the shore, ranging from people ready to be disciples to people already set against Him and everything in-between. To this very diverse audience Jesus said...



Matthew 13:3b-9 ~ 3bNASB “Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 “Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 “But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 “Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 “And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9 “He who has ears, let him hear.”

I hope you can already discern the intended meaning of the parable. It wasn't used to prevent people from understanding – it was used to help them understand. Jesus used a parable to describe the very situation they were all collectively experiencing at that very moment.

Let's look a little closer. Matthew used the same verb ἐξέρχομαι (ěx-ěř-ǰō-mī), in verse 1, when he wrote, “Jesus went out,” as Jesus used for the “Sower went out” to start His parable. It would be striking to anyone reading or listening to the Gospel. Matthew intended us to see the connection... He wanted us to see Jesus as the Sower.

And as soon as we do see that we are well on our way to making the parable an allegory. Resist. Even though the Sower is the subject, his identity is not particularly important to the point. The four different soils, so to speak are quite central and it is unimportant to identify them to get the point. The seed is also key and yet it is inconsequential to the point.

The way a parable works, is to glean the central point from the context of the whole, in keeping with the speaker's thrust and intent.

It is very easy to see that Jesus was trying to show all the people there that day that they would each respond to Him. No matter what the individual details turned out to be... How quickly one might reject, or how long another might hang around... No matter how small or how large the fruit yield others might have... The bottom line is there were only two kinds of people.

Those who enter the Kingdom of Heaven and those who do not.

Isn't it just fascinating? Jesus' first parable to start His teaching was to show His audience that some of them would accept Him and some of them would not.

Like the real-world situation Jesus used, the result is what's important. He listed six possible results, three that produced no fruit and three that did. The Sower, the seed, even the soil falls into the background as we recognize either there is a positive outcome, or there is a negative outcome. The outcome is never mixed.

Fruit is either produced or it is not. People are either born again or they are not. People either get Jesus and

His Message or they do not – that’s the point of the parable.

From that correct basis we can move on to dig deeper and glean a great many things, but if a person skips that first step of anchoring their interpretation to coincide with Jesus’ original intent, their application may drift into very dangerous waters.



Matthew 13:10 ~ 10NASB And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

To move the story Matthew puts the disciples question here. It may have happened just that way. The

Disciples may have interrupted Jesus' teaching for a private conversation in the boat, it's unlikely, but possible. Just know that the Gospels are arranged theologically, not necessarily chronologically.

As I said before, the Divinely inspired Matthew did a great job of composing his Gospel account and chapter 13 is particularly good. We have an opening that connects to chapter 12, a closing in verse 53 that connects to the narrative going forward. We have a primary parable told, then justified, then explained. That's followed by 3 parables told to the crowd, with an explanation and then 3 more parables told to the Disciples, making 7 parables in all.

The material is organized by the Holy Spirit through Matthew as He chooses. That is why context is such a big deal. You can't say God inspired the words, but not the order of the words.

“Why do You speak to them in parables?”

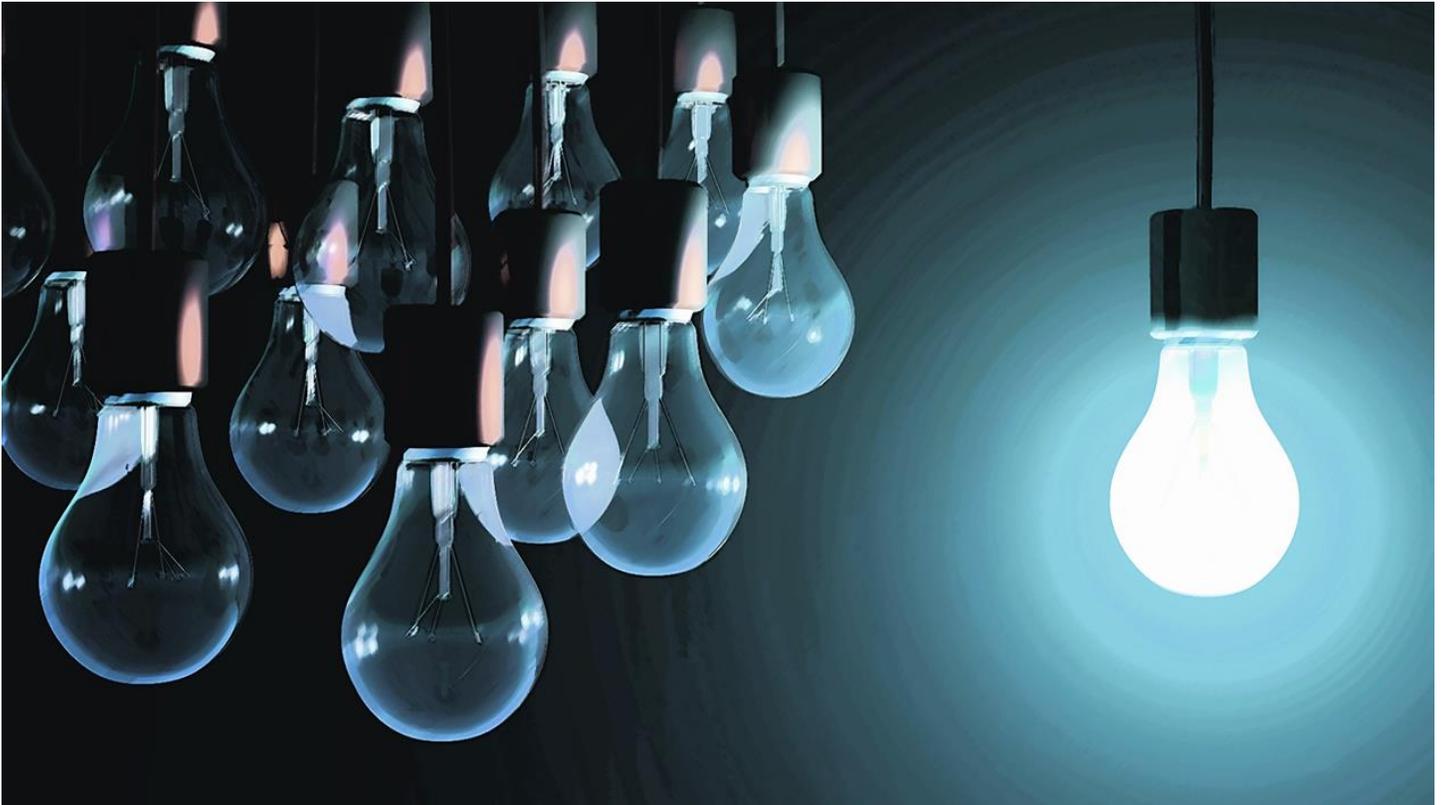
Because of this question, many people wrongly assume that it was to speak in code so that the uninitiated wouldn't accidentally understand and be Saved. That's insane!

As I've tried to show, parables are powerful aids to learning and are specifically designed for that very purpose. Jesus used parables to help people understand, but there's a catch... A parable can only be understood by a person who is essentially on the same page with the speaker.

If you were in tune with Jesus, you would have readily understood His meaning upon hearing His parable. If not, what was required was some effort to get on the same page. You'd need to think about it, ask some questions, pray about it, work towards a correct understanding.

Either way, the person who got the point was the person with an open and eager heart to get the point. Well, then, conversely, the person who did not get the point was the person who was not on the same page with Jesus and also not willing to work to get on the same page.

We'll talk about that more next time. For now, let me jump ahead to Jesus' explanation because it will cause more confusion if I don't address one quick point now.



Matthew 13:18-23 ~ 18NASB“Hear then the parable of the sower. 19“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20“The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes

unfruitful. 23“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

We will pick this back up starting in verse 11 and examine the whole thing in greater detail. What I want to say today and why I jumped ahead to read these verses, is with Jesus' explanation, you might think the parable was full of secret symbology and really was an allegorical story.

I said the parable really only had one main point. I also said in order to get that point, the listener had to be on the same page with Jesus.

His explanation of the various elements serves to help people get on that same sheet – but once they are – the details are unimportant. That's the difference between parable and allegory.

Nathan told King David a parable and David was oblivious to the meaning until Nathan said, “You are the man!” David instantly saw the connection. If he hadn't, Nathan would have had to explain that the “Rich man,” was David, the “Poor man,” was Uriah and the “Little

ewe lamb,” was Bathsheba. Once understanding was achieved though the particulars of the parable are unimportant.

Likewise, once a person understands Jesus’ Parable of the Sower, defining the various aspects of the story is actually counterproductive to grasping and acting on the point.

My friends, there are two kinds of statements. Closed statements that are what they are, period. And then there are statements meant to elicit a response. Jesus’ opening parable is the latter kind. Remember verse 9, “He who has ears, let him hear.”

Jesus is trying to get the people to react – again it would be Jesus saying, recognize that you will either accept Me, or reject Me, be very cautious how you proceed.

That’s a message for all people through all time including for us here today. Jesus is speaking... How far will you go to ensure that you are open to what He has to say?