



Jesus practices *demonstration* of the kingdom before *proclamation* (we should too)

Parables “come alongside” a new or unfamiliar situation, with a story or illustration to which everyone can relate. In this way, we “get it”, even if the payoff line is shocking or disconcerting.

- Parables aren’t allegories, with a one-to-one correspondence of every character or detail.
- So – don’t look for super-hidden meaning. Jesus’ parables are meant to shed light, not conceal (see Mark 4:21-22)
- Ask: “What’s the action or picture being painted?”
- Parable of the Sower is one of the few that Jesus *does* explain, but even the explanation isn’t overly specific; the meaning & application lies in the overall point, not the details

Parable of the Sower (or Soils) –

- For them: telegraphed the reality that some people would hear Jesus’ words, but not respond, while others would
- For us: answers the question of why people can start from the same point, hear the same message, and end up at different places in spiritual maturity

Verses 10-12: *When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”*

Is Jesus being difficult?

A: No – see verses 21-23. He wants to be understood.

- Explanation comes some time later, when Jesus and disciples are alone together
- This section jumps, then, between things said to disciples only and things taught to the crowd
- Verse 34 is the key to understanding which was for disciples only, and which teaching was to the crowd
  - But, makes us ask why Jesus chose to teach differently to different groups?

*Jesus knew the importance of belief in coming to God.*

- Examples: Mark 1:15, chapter 9 with the demon-possessed boy
- Book of John has the word “belief” more than 100 times: 1:11, chapter 2, 3:36, Doubting Thomas, and many more
- Mark 4:24-25 – “with the measure you use” – come with a big “belief cup” and it will be filled!
- *Something gets unlocked in us, causing us to see and hear differently, once we believe.*
- We don’t understand our way into the Kingdom of God
  - *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* = “Faith Seeking Understanding”

Some guidance on how to approach parables:

1. Parables are meant to make you THINK
2. Parables are CULTURAL
3. Parables are VISUAL
4. Parables are largely AGRICULTURAL
5. Parables are mostly aimed at illuminating the KINGDOM OF GOD.

Kingdom of God is a *spiritual reality* – things can be unseen, and still be real

- It’s broader than the magic of God, disconnected from context
- The Kingdom of God is a new order, new ethics, with Jesus as king
- It is other- and all-of-us focused, not self-focused
- Jesus’ pithy statements, like “It’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” point to the ethics of the Kingdom of God
- Membership is open to anyone. It’s not a club. And the price for admission has been paid. But, must forsake this life in order to gain that life.
- Believing is a form of dying. Suspending cynicism and doubt in order to gain access to God.

### **Think It Through:**

Mark said in the message that when we believe, something changes. We see and hear spiritual truth differently. Have you experienced that? What’s been your story with belief and believing and how you’ve responded to truth?

Where’s somewhere in your life where you desire the power (the magic) of God to do its work? Do you also desire the Kingdom? Why or why not?

Look back and recall something Jesus said or taught in the book of Mark thus far (Chapter 1-Chapter 4:34). How does it point to a reality about the Kingdom of God, and how the kingdom is different than the kingdom of self or life on earth?

Have you joined the work of the Kingdom of God? What role or purpose do you feel you’ve been called to?