

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: Parables

Learning Goals: Students should become familiar the definition and basic characteristics of Jesus' parables (one of the primary teaching methods of Jesus).

Question: What was your favorite bedtime story growing up? Were there stories that your parents told you over and over again?

Prayer

Review: What is the kingdom? - "the in-breaking of God into history..."

When is the kingdom? - "already/not yet"

Where is the kingdom? - Heaven, Heart, Earth

Discuss Question

Parables are probably the most characteristic feature of Jesus' preaching and teaching. There are somewhere between 55-75 parables in the gospels.

What is a parable?

- etymology (Gk.): para = "beside" and ballo = "to cast" (something cast beside something else to compare it)
- English Definition - "a short narrative with at least two levels of meaning"
- C. H. Dodd - "A parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."
- Biblical - could refer to proverb (Luke 4:23), riddle (Mark 3:23), comparison (Matthew 13:33), contrast (Luke 18:1-8), simple stories (Luke 13:6-9), and complex stories (Matthew 22:1-14)

Jesus' use of parables:

- works of art
- teaching method - primarily in regards to the Kingdom of God
 - uses them to confront people with the character of God's Kingdom and invite them to participate in it or live in accordance with it.
 - "Parables tend to disarm listeners, for the meaning is often driven home before they can resist the point being made." (Stein, 125)
 - Using parables to obscure the kingdom at times (see Mark 4:11-12) - Jesus seems to be saying that he doesn't want people to understand; quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 - parables are a prophetic warning against hard-heartedness
- weapons he used in conflicts with opponents
- "windows" into heaven - illustration of ladder peeking into heaven

**Bring a ladder to class. Climb up on the ladder and lift the ceiling tile to "peek" into the space above the ceiling. You can't see everything, but you get a glimpse of what is up there. Parables are like a glimpse into the Kingdom of Heaven. We can't see everything, but we get a peek into what it is like.*

Characteristics of parables:

- brief and symmetrical
- typically omit unnecessary descriptions and leave motives unexplained
- usually taken from everyday life, but are not necessarily realistic
- often contain features that would strike the hearer as unusual, unlikely, or even absurd (this is often the point that invites hearers to a deeper, spiritual or metaphorical level of meaning)
- “stock metaphors”: kings for God, banquets and harvests for judgement, servants for God’s people, etc.
- often contain a reversal or call for a reversal of thinking
- most parables are theocentric - focused on God, his kingdom, and expectations for humans
- often invite hearers to change behavior or increase discipleship
- Way for Jesus to introduce potentially dangerous teachings (example: talk of the kingdom would raise concerns for the Romans and Jewish leaders; Jesus could speak about politically sensitive issues)

Message of the parables:

- The Kingdom is here (Binding the strong man)
- The Kingdom is coming (Parable of the talents)
- Discipleship

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Parable
- Theocentric
- Stock Parable