

the longest version is best used as the base. Look for similarities and differences.

- 2) Knowing history, nature, and the culture of biblical times contribute to interpretation H. D. Williams, 9 Rules to Guide the Interpretation of Parables, p.13
- 3) Beware, many modern Bible translations use dynamic equivalence, inserting opinion or modern terms rather than translating what the text says, thus misleading.
- 4) Read the parable within its context. Often the context is the reason for the parable.
- 5) Seek to isolate the problem Jesus is addressing with the parable. For example, the parables in Luke 15 (lost sheep, coin, and son) address the bad attitude of the Pharisees self-righteousness and condemnation of others. Keathley

b. Any truth taken from a parable must be Biblical

- 1) It must be consistent with the overall truth of the Bible. We must always compare Scripture with Scripture.
- 2) A parable is not to be used as the source of a doctrine.

c. Look for the single truth Jesus was presenting.

- 1) Do not attempt to give meaning to every part of the parable story. Many of the details are just filler for the story.
- 2) “Parables are to teach a doctrine or truth, and if the parable is understood properly, invariably they teach an application. The literal sense of the word-picture always carries one truth, but application to many situations in a believer’s life.” Williams, p. 11
- 3) Seek to identify practical ways to apply the truth of the parable to your life.

Conclusion: My goal this morning has been to whet your appetite for studying the Bible and for digging into the parables of our Lord. This sermon has been more instructional than usual, but if you will keep this instruction and use it in your Bible study, it will help you to rightly divide the Word of Truth!

Song: Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord - **337**

Understanding Parables

3 January 2021 AM – Matthew 13:3 – Parables21 – Scott Childs

Introduction: As you read through the first three Gospels in the Bible, you will soon come upon the parables of the Lord. **Read Matthew 13:1-3.** In his parables, Jesus talked about all sorts of real life situations. He talked about planting seeds, weeds in the field, yeast in bread dough, hidden treasures, fishing nets, working in a vineyard, marriage, investments, debts, helping the helpless, fig trees, special dinners, lost sheep, wayward sons, unjust judges, and much more. Each of Jesus parables had one thing in common with all the others; they were based on true to life events of His day. Those who heard Jesus could picture clearly each story he told.

We live in a different culture and a different age. Many of the stories that were clear to Jesus’ listeners are a bit unclear to us. Therefore, we are going to need some guidelines to help us understand them properly.

Transition: This morning I want to point out several important guidelines to help us rightly understand Bible parables.

The first guideline to help us rightly understand Bible parables is ...

1. We must know what a parable is.

a. Note first a parable’s definition.

- 1) The word *parable* is simply an English form of the Greek word *parabole* which literally means a placing of one thing by the side of another.
- 2) **Charles Ryrie** defines a parable as “a figure of speech in which a moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by an analogy drawn from everyday experiences.”
- 3) Miles Smith states that a parable “is a specific kind of similitude which is employed for a specific purpose.” (Bible Study Helps by Miles Woodward Smith found in KJV Bible by Edinburgh)
- 4) It is a made up story designed to teach a lesson through comparison. Every parable always had a moral or message behind the story.
- 5) A parable may be brief or it may be lengthy, but every parable is true to life. It is always taken from events in

real life. A parable has aptly been called **an earthly story with a heavenly meaning**.

b. Note next a parable's distinction

- 1) Parables differ from other similar figures of speech. **Do not miss this!**
- 2) Smith notes, "It is to be distinguished, on the one hand, from the metaphor and the simile; and on the other hand, from the fable and the allegory."
 - a) A metaphor compares one thing to another for emphasis. For example: "*The Lord is my shepherd*" ... "*I am the bread of life.*" ... "*I am the way and the truth and the life.*" ... "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*"
 - b) A simile generally compares two things using like or as. (1Th 5:2) "... *the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*" (Pro 25:11) "*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*" (Psa 102:6) "*I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.*"
 - c) A fable is a short moral story, often using animal characters. Jotham told a fable about trees become king (Judges 9:7-20).
 - d) An allegory may be an extended metaphor. It uses fictional characters. "In a fully developed allegory, each personage and each happening has some hidden, symbolic meaning." (Smith) It is true that a few of Jesus' parables do resemble allegories, but not all.
- 3) While the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are abundant with parables, John's Gospel contains metaphors and similes but no true parables.

The second guideline to help us rightly understand Bible parables is ...

2. We must learn why the Lord used parables

a. Jesus used parables to teach a single truth

- 1) Smith adds, "A parable is designed to teach but a single truth. That truth is not hidden in some detail of the narrative; on the contrary, it is the obvious truth which is central in the narrative when the story is considered as a whole."

- 2) In a parable, we must look for its single truth and not seek to find hidden meanings in every character and article of the story as if it were an allegory.

b. Jesus used parables to improve understanding

- 1) As a true to life story, a parable makes its single truth easy to grasp. The parable of finding a lost sheep was something many of Jesus' listeners had done. The parable of the Good Samaritan touched a chord in the hearts of any Jew who had mingled with a Samaritan.
- 2) A parable points out and clarifies spiritual truths. It makes it easier to comprehend and apply.
- 3) Again Smith points out, "These things being so, the meaning of any given parable should yield itself readily to every sincere reader of the Scriptures."

c. Jesus used parables for better retention

- 1) Statements of fact are more difficult to remember than interesting stories.
- 2) Jesus' true to life parables certainly stuck in minds.

d. Jesus used parables to isolate truth

- 1) Once many in the crowds who heard Jesus closed their hearts in unbelief, He began using parables when speaking to the multitudes. (Read Mark 4:1-2, 10-12, 33-34).
- 2) Some by simple faith heard Jesus' parables, enquired, understood and believed. However, the hard-hearted unbelievers saw His parables as confusing stories. They were blinded by their own unbelief, not by Christ.
- 3) G. Campbell Morgan states, "Our Lord did not intend then in the use of the parable to prevent men seeing, but to help them to see. He did not want to prevent them hearing, but to quicken their power of hearing. He did not keep men away from the forgiveness and the mercy of God, but He lured them towards it."

The third guideline to help us rightly understand Bible parables is ...

3. We must be careful with our interpretation

a. Study the parable carefully

- 1) If the parable is in more than one Gospel, compare. Often