

JESUS STORIES

May 05, 2024 Study Guide Lead Pastor Brian Bales –Jesus Stories: *Why?* Matthew 13:10-17

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”¹¹ And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.¹² For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ““You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.”¹⁵ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.¹⁷ For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Matthew 13:10-17(ESV)

COMMENTARY

- a. *Why do You speak to them in parables?* The way Jesus used parables prompted the disciples to ask this. Apparently, Jesus’ use of parables wasn’t as easy as simple illustrations of spiritual truth.
- b. *Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given:* Jesus explained that He used parables so that the hearts of those rejecting would not be hardened further.
- i. The same sun that softens the wax hardens the clay; and so the very same gospel message that humbles the honest heart and leads to repentance may also harden the heart of the dishonest listener and confirm that one in their path of disobedience.
- ii. “The parable conceals truth from those who are either too lazy to think or too blinded by prejudice to see. It puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the individual. It reveals truth to him who desires truth; it conceals truth from him who does not wish to see the truth.” (Barclay)
- iii. “Thus the parables spoken to the crowds do not simply convey information, nor mask it, but challenge the hearers.” (Carson)
- d. *Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand:* In this sense, the parables of Jesus were not illustrations making difficult things clear to all. They presented God’s message so the spiritually sensitive could understand, but the hardened would merely hear a story without heaping up additional condemnation for rejecting God’s Word.
- i. Parables are an example of God’s mercy towards the hardened. The parables were given in the context of the Jewish leaders’ building rejection of Jesus and His work. In this sense they were examples of mercy given to the undeserving.

e. **And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:** By speaking in parables Jesus also fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, speaking in a way that the hardened would hear but not hear and see but not see.

i. **The heart of this people has grown dull** is more literally “fat” instead of dull. “A fat heart is a fearful plague...None can delight in God’s law that are fat-hearted.” (Trapp)

ii. “They did not really see what they saw, nor hear what they heard. The plainer the teaching, the more they were puzzled by it.” (Spurgeon)

f. *But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear:* In light of this, those who do understand the parables of Jesus are genuinely blessed. Not only do they gain the benefit of the spiritual truth illustrated, but they also display some measure of responsiveness to the Holy Spirit.

i. “You under the Gospel are made to know what the greatest and best of men under the law could not discover. The shortest day of summer is longer than the longest day in winter.” (Spurgeon)

A Life Application Study Guide

James 1:22-25 tells us to put into practice what we are discovering in God’s word.

1. The word *parable* in Greek: *parabolē* ‘placing side by side, application’.
 - How have you previously thought of the parables told by Jesus?

 - Have you read them as just a simple story to make a point or considered that Jesus’ objective was more complex? What do we read in His reply to the disciples?

2. Consider how challenging it can be to actively listen in an effort to both hear and understand the narrative and the speaker. Think of a time when you attended a conference or a class. What information caught your attention and caused you to think more critically about what you were hearing?

- What did you see and observe in the visual presentation of the curriculum? What did you miss?

- What did you discover about the conference presenter or professor? How much more time would be required to know that individual on a personal level?

3. Brian asks us to consider this, do we want to know Jesus, or do we simply want to know about Him?

- If we sincerely want to know Him personally, what will that require of us?

- We can begin to know Jesus more intimately as we engage each week in the sermon series teaching but Brian reminds us that it's a choice. What might be a barrier in your life and schedule to fully engaging in this teaching series?

4. Look back at the side-by-side structure of a parable. Jesus will tell us truths through the stories that He narrates as illustrations toward a greater understanding of His message.
 - How important and timeless are these truths intended for us to live by that Jesus taught over 2000 years ago? Have we begun to think of some truths as outdated or antiquated and if so, why?

 - We have been challenged to ask for *eyes to see and ears to hear*. How today, here is Northern VA do we sharpen a heart that has *grown dull*? What is our next step?

MAKING IT REAL

Identify one choice that you can make this week to intentionally get to know Jesus better.