

# The Purpose of Parables

Neil Girrard

When Jesus' disciples asked Him why He taught the crowds with parables, He answered, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn and their sins be forgiven.'" (Mk. 4:11-12)

Jesus was telling them that the crowds, whom He saw as sheep without a shepherd (Mk. 6:34), the crowds whom He healed and set free from demonic control and oppression (Lk. 6:17-18), were still on the "outside." Those on the inside are given knowledge of "the mystery of the kingdom of God." Mystery, in the Bible is not an unknown fact upon which we must use logic and deductive reasoning to ferret out the correct answer. Far from it. A mystery, in the Bible, is something God has allowed or caused to be hidden from men until such time as He brings it forth into the view of men.

This is why Paul says, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. 2:7-8) In this case, not even the demonic beings who stirred up the Jews to murder their Messiah were in on God's secrets that would be revealed about Christ's redemptive work on the cross.

What is the significance of the gospel of the kingdom? Just that this is *the* gospel Jesus and the original disciples preached and that we must believe to be saved! God now *commands* all men everywhere to repent and obey Him who is the King. (Acts 17:30) The biggest failures of the modern "gospels" is that they have replaced obedience to Christ with a fuzzy relativism (lawlessness) where it's okay to do pretty much whatever is right in our own eyes so long as we do it in the name of Christ! This false teaching will not go over well on judgment day! (Mt. 7:23)

What is the significance of "the mystery of the kingdom of God"? Well, if the Bible is just stories and parables to you, you're still on the outside. You have eyes to see and ears to hear (and be scratched! – 2 Tim. 4:3-4) and you have heaped up knowledge but you do not perceive spiritual realities and you are unable to hear (let alone rightly divide) the word of truth. You are always learning but always unable to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim. 3:7) Accumulating knowledge without being born again of the Spirit and water is useless – we must *enter* the kingdom (Jn. 3:3, 5) to be on the inside. On the inside, God reveals to us the mystery of His kingdom.

To those who falsely believe themselves to be on the inside, Jesus still says,

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." (Rev. 3:17-18)

What is the purpose of Jesus' parables? So that you might turn and your sins be forgiven you, that you might not die in your sins and face eternity with the devastating knowledge that you had the answer in your hand but not in your heart. The purpose of Jesus' parables is to be one way that you, without the aid of any spiritual discernment (something also available only to those on the inside), can evaluate whether you are in or out of His kingdom.

“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” (Mt. 13:33)

Is Jesus telling you what this means or is it just another story that you have to figure out for yourself what it means? Or do you have to diligently search through various tomes and commentaries to find out what someone else thinks it means? Is it given to you to know the mystery of the kingdom of God or are you still on the outside?

Let he who has ears hear.

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