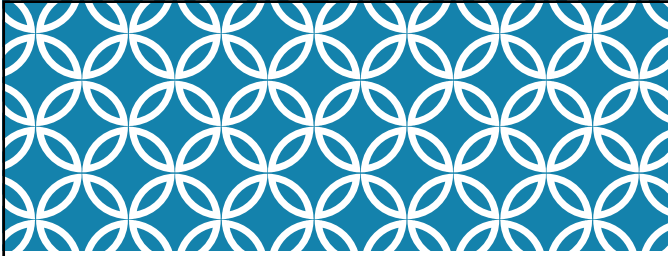


The Parables of Jesus

WEEK 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO PARABLES
PROFESSOR: DR. GARWOOD ANDERSON





AN INTRODUCTION TO PARABLES | Garwood P. Anderson

1

WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?

Because we are hard of hearing – rather, _____.

2

WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?

Because we are hard of hearing – rather, we are hard of heart.

3

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Parables are Jesus' way of _____
(Eugene Peterson, after Emily Dickinson)

4

WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?

Because we are hard of hearing – rather, we are hard of heart.

Parables are Jesus' way of "telling it slant"
(Eugene Peterson, after Emily Dickinson)

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

5

WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?

Because we are hard of hearing – rather, we are hard of heart.

Parables are Jesus' way of "telling it slant"
(E. Peterson, after Emily Dickinson)

Jesus' parables don't so much make "points" as they made friends,
enemies, and converts.

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“At its simplest, the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from the nature of 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.”

(C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 5)

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

7

A METAPHOR OR SIMILE

8

DRAWN FROM COMMON LIFE

9

ARRESTING THE HEARER
BY ITS VIVIDNESS OR
STRANGENESS

10

LEAVING THE MIND IN
SUFFICIENT DOUBT . . .
TO TEASE IT INTO ACTIVE
THOUGHT

11

LET'S ILLUSTRATE IT: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-7

And the LORD sent Nathan to David.

He came to him, and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his morsel, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.



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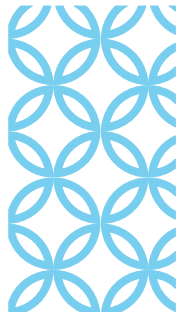
LET'S ILLUSTRATE IT: 2 SAMUEL 12:1-7

"Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Nathan said to David, "You are the man."

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Some Interpretive Options
Allegory?

HOW DO PARABLES WORK?

14

EARLY CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Patristic and Medieval interpretation preferred to treat the parables as Christian allegories.

- Not only broad representation, but details pressed into allegorical service
- Meanings that are perhaps theologically true, but in which the original intent is lost

15

ST. AUGUSTINE
ON THE GOOD
SAMARITAN

- The man = Adam
- Jersusalem = City of Heavenly Peace
- Jericho = moon (=mortality)
- Robbers = Devil and his angels
- Stripping = removing immortality
- Beating = persuading to sin
- Half dead = partial darkening through sin
- Priest = OT priesthood, Law
- Levite = OT prophets
- Samaritan = Christ

16

ST. AUGUSTINE
ON THE GOOD
SAMARITAN

- Bind Wounds = restraint of sin
- Oil = comfort of hope
- Wine = exhortation to spirited work
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = two love commandments
- Innkeeper = Apostle Paul
- Samaritan's return = resurrection of Christ

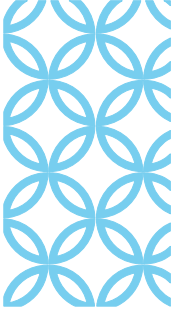
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ALLEGORIZING
INTERPRETATION?

This sort of approach continued into and even beyond the Reformation.

The allegorical approach made sense and proved attractive because it showed Jesus teaching the truths of Christian theology in advance of their development.

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Some Interpretive Options
Allegory?
Morality Tale?
Joke?
The "Parabolic Pump Fake"

HOW DO PARABLES WORK?

19

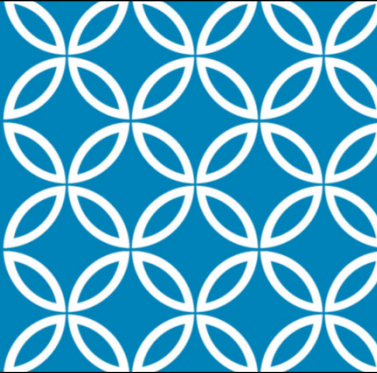
WHAT'S AHEAD

That Pesky Widow
Luke 18:1-8

Those Ungrateful Workers
Matthew 20:1-16

That Conniving Businessman
Luke 16:1-13

Those Lost Sheep, Coins, and Sons
Luke 15:1-32



20
