
Why Parables



He told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” 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. 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. 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. 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.” 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. ’ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 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.

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. (Matt 13:1-23)

A woman went to preach. As she was preaching, she said: "Jesus loves you". "I have already heard it. Can you come up with something else?" She went to another person and said: "Jesus loves you." "Sorry, but I am busy right now", was the answer. She persisted and went yet to another one: "Jesus loves you". This one, a teenager, was so excited to hear the message that he ran home and told it to all the members of his family. The father and the brothers gave him a good beating shouting: "God is great!". As the woman was about to go home, a drunkard asked her a question: "Do you think that this Jesus also loves me?" "Of course, He does." "Would you like to have an orange juice with me?" asked her the drunkard.

Meant to Surprise

The Gospel, which we hear today, is composed of three parts: the parable of the sower, its explanation, and the reason for using parables to teach about the mysteries of God's kingdom. A parable has always an element of surprise. It forces the hearer to puzzle out its meaning. The parable of the sower is no different. A farmer, after listening to it, said: "What an inexperienced sower and what a waste of seeds. You need to prepare the soil before you begin to sow". Equally surprising is the reason for using parables in preaching. "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive" (Matt 13:14). What is the point of teaching if you know that your students will not get the message? Preaching the truth is often the most disappointing task in this world because of its meager results. When God was sending Isaiah to call the people of Judah to repentance He knew that the prophet would fail: "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" (Matt 13:15; Isa 6:9-10). Yet, for the sake of the few who listen and understand it is worth the effort.

Today, we are in danger of missing the message about the Kingdom of God. Today, the parables are meant to surprise us. We are not better than the former generations. Our hearts are dull and our ears are deaf. We also do not want to hear that something is wrong with us and that we badly need God. Using the parables Jesus tries to arouse our curiosity, tap

into meaningful existential questions and touch our lives. A straightforward message about a loving God can get lost in the noise and business of our lives, but a parable about a sower who throws his seeds left and right not minding the quality of soil gets our reaction. "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".

Meant to transform

I had a student who thought he was great. While other students listen to my teaching and participated in our class activities he played his mobile phone. I tried various ways to change his attitude, but to no avail. At the end, he got the lowest grade in the class. He was upset.

There are many Christians who behave in a similar way. While others spend time pondering over God's word, they spend their time on something else. Since they know "everything", God's word cannot teach them anything new. And that is the greatest tragedy of life. The Gospel is clear in its message: "change your ways of life and trust God". Yet, many of us are deaf and blind to its consequence. Jesus does not promise his followers a pie in the sky. He made it very clear that those who want to follow him will have a hard time in this life. The explanation of the parable of the sower says the same thing. A true Christian does not collaborate with evil, does not give in to fears and anxieties of a hard life, and has different standards than the world around.

Who is that "good soil" that "listens and understands" these mysteries? "Tax collectors, sinners, and prostitutes" (Matt 9:10; 11:19; 21:31). Jesus said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13). Such people experienced the destructive power of sin and they longed to be free. Paul says that the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). This power reveals itself in transformed lives. Tax collectors become apostles, sinners begin new life and prostitutes become saints. However, the power of the Gospel is powerless in those who consider themselves "good" and think that they see, hear, and understand.

Conclusion

A traveller came to a village. The villagers were hospitable and shared many stories about their lives.

"Do you know that our lake sings?", they ask him one day. "A lake? Sings? Impossible", he said. "I have been there and have not heard anything." Then, he remembered that each time he went there he met an old man coming back to the village. He never bothered to talk with him, but then he resolved to ask him about the singing lake. He met the old man the next day. "Are you listening to the lake?", he asked. The old man nodded his head. "Me too", lied the traveller. The old man smiled. The traveller was watching the old man, but could not get a word from him. "The music was fantastic today. Isn't it?", he

said while leaving the old man. The man did not say anything. On his last day, the traveller went to say goodbye to the lake and to the old man. This time the old man spoke: "Only when you stop pretending, you can hear the lake singing."

Mysteries of God's kingdom are hidden and revealed in the parables. We need to become sincere and teachable to grasp their truth. When we stop pretending that all is fine and that we understand everything, we can get their hidden message and be transformed. "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt 13:9).

Prayer Intentions

- Let us pray for Christine; may God fulfill the plans He has for her life;
- Let us pray for all those who, for different reasons, lost their faith; may God revive in them the power of the seed that was sown in them;
- Let us pray for all of us; let the seed fulfill its work in our lives;

Quotes for the Week

Sunday: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa 55:10-11)

Monday: "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts

and grows; he knows not how. (Mark 4:26-27)

Tuesday: The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches (Luke 13:19)

Wednesday: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened. (Matt 13:33)

Thursday: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matt 13:44)

Friday: The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt 13:45)

Saturday: the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. (Matt 13:47-48).

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team