

Parables – Sower – myfishbites.com

You'll find the story in Luke 8.4-15.

INTRO

What is a parable? Well, it's a story that somebody tells to illustrate a point. The story may or may not be true but it hints towards a spiritual principle or concept that people are able to pick out from the story. It has hidden meaning. It's a way of people 'owning' a story as they can relate to it. For example, if you were in the desert with a tribe that had never seen the sea you'd tell a parable about the desert not about the sea. But a parable has more power than simply a story. It is there for people to take or leave, to challenge and provoke thought and action.

ACTION

Let's look at the Parable of the Sower and get some points out of it. Read the Bible passage through.

There are 8 points that we have identified. There are more but parables are usually self-explanatory. To try to get too many deep points out of the parable that may not be there is unwise. But we don't have all the answers so think about it.

1. GO TO JESUS

People went to Jesus. They wanted to hear from him. What is your attitude? Do you want, really want to go to Jesus? How can we do this?

2. JESUS KNOWS

Jesus was a man - but he was also fully God. He had grown in stature and wisdom. He understood people and the power and method of his message. In verse 4 we see that Jesus waited until a great crowd had gathered with people from every town nearby. Jesus knew that this was a message that warranted maximum audience numbers.

In our Christian life there will be times when we are called to speak to large groups, small groups and individuals. We should be sensitive to what we say and when. For example as we've said elsewhere on the site, some people say evangelism should be friendship evangelism. Wrong. Evangelism is whatever God calls you to do. Jesus didn't know everyone he met but spoke the Gospel anyway. Sometimes he spoke the truth to someone on their own, giving them his full attention. Other times Jesus spoke to the disciples. Sometimes he even told people not to tell others what had happened (a sure sign they would I guess!!) We need this kind of sensitivity to the Spirit.

3. STORIES

Most people love hearing stories, especially when they inspire you. Someone I know he delivers cars for a living has to make his way about the UK as cheaply as possible. This often means getting lifts from people. He told many stories about the lifts he has been given. Like the times when lorry drivers have selflessly gone out of their way to drop him in towns and junctions nowhere near where he needs to go. Like the time he was given a lift in a car going at 130mph and got out, still shaking. The guys in the car offered to take him back later but he ran off, fearing for his safety! Realised later the car had been stolen.

These things interest us. Jesus knew the power of stories, parables. Stories are very effective because they are real, powerful, people relate to them and remember them. If you think about your life, it's probably the things that have happened rather than words spoken that lodge in your mind.

The principle is that in your witness and daily life, all you do is a story witnessing to others. In addition, if you teach, lead, share, talk about Jesus to anyone, use stories, illustrations and parables. They are very powerful, maybe more so than simple words.

4. I CAN RELATE TO THAT

As we've said earlier, a story used should be a story people can relate to. A story loses its power if people are trying to figure out what you're on about. This is especially true in other distant cultures and places. Jesus used the example of a farmer in the Parable. People could relate to that. When he talked about seed falling on the path or being eaten by birds, people would've said, 'yeh, that happens to me, if only I had a scarecrow to get rid of the pesky things..'

5. IT'S SIMPLE, BUT NOT THAT SIMPLE

A story without hidden meaning is not a parable. A parable is by nature a little bit abstract and bizarre, otherwise it would be a regular story. Jesus didn't want to be known as the first century JK Rowling writing and speaking great novels and stories. There was a point to the parables.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus talks about a farmer planting seed. He then tells his audience that some seed fell by the road, other seed was eaten by the birds, some seed fell on rocks and died because of lack of water. Some seed fell on thorny weeds and choked some of the good weeds. Some seed fell on good ground and grew creating more seed. Then he says, 'All you who have ears listen to what I've said.'

And then he went and spoke to his disciples.

Now, while I'd have understood what Jesus was on about, I would have had to think pretty hard to understand what any deeper meaning was

wouldn't you? Here's some guy who tells a kind of story which in terms of stories isn't that great. I mean, it won't get a movie made about it will it..

Yet here was the power of the parable. This is the heart of what Jesus was. As Christians we have to find Jesus, accept him, believe in him and then live this upside down life in terms of the world's ideas. We learn from the Bible that the eyes of God looks over the earth to find people seeking him. That was Jesus' intention in using parables as he explained to his disciples in verse 10.

One of the points of the parables is that the stories have deliberately hidden meanings so people are forced to think, be challenged and lodged in their minds. Those who don't want to seek after the meaning of the parable get pushed out of the picture but the true seekers will be attracted.

6. JESUS REVEALED THE ANSWER TO HIS DISCIPLES

This is encouraging. There are many times where we don't understand what is going on in our lives. I'm often in that place! God, what are you doing? Why isn't this happening? Why is this happening? How did they get away with that? Why don't you do this?

The truth is that there is an answer and one day God will reveal it to you. Just as Jesus did to the disciples. Very often answers aren't hard to find, we just don't look or don't choose to see them.

Jesus gives the disciples 2 answers. The first is the point made in point 4 above. The second is the interpretation of the story. Notice how not everyone gets these explanations, only the disciples. Jesus speaks clearly to his followers, he speaks to you and me quite clearly in many ways, we just have to have eyes and ears ready to see and hear.

To understand what Jesus' parable was about, the disciples first needed to ask Jesus and second listen to his answer. Think about it.

7. SUCCESS IN THE GOSPEL WILL BE VARIABLE

When you are a follower of Jesus, you are called to live and preach Christ to other people. This means that you should be aware of the upsides and downsides of the whole business! One of the things we learn from this parable is that not everyone will listen or hear what you are saying. Not everyone will get saved and follow Jesus. The encouraging thing is that many will and they in turn will produce many other disciples if they follow Christ in the right way.

7. WHO ARE YOU?

Jesus talks about all kinds of seed. Let's look at them..

- some people hear the Gospel message but the devil comes along and takes away the message and they don't believe
- some people hear and accept God's teaching but they don't allow it to go deep into their lives. When trouble comes they give up their beliefs
- some people hear but let the worries, riches and pleasures of the world get in the way of them growing and producing good fruit
- some people hear God's teaching with good, honest hearts and obey it and patiently produce good God fruit

SO, what should we be like to be full-on disciples of Jesus?

There are principles we need to follow:

1. When you hear God's Word or God speaks, defend yourself and don't let the words go out of you heart or mind. That means don't watch TV after God speaks, don't rush away, think about it.
2. Don't forget to feed your faith. Like a plant needs water and food, so does your faith. Don't let the work of God go un-fed. This means reading your Bible, communicating with God, meeting with other Christians and filling your mind with God-stuff not rubbish! Reading your Bible, praying, meeting with other Christians and having quiet-times with God are you tools.
3. Some Christians just find themselves out of depth in a world that seems to offer so much. They struggle to live out their faith because of the other things on offer like bad TV programmes, soaps, evil music, getting drunk, sleeping around..

What Jesus wants is for us to choose what he would want, not what may look attractive to us. Make positive choices based on what the Bible says. Yes, be in the world and hang out with all kinds of people and mates but be wise. If you're not strong in your faith, spend more time with Christians, Christian music and positive stuff. Even if you feel quite mature as a Christian, be aware.

Remember that your sins can be forgiven by Jesus but you need to say sorry and turn away from them.

4. Some people don't let God's teaching go deep into their lives so if you want to be an effective Christian you need to allow God's teaching to go deep into your life. That means study, commitment, being holy (doing what God says) and it's hard. But God will help and it's worth the sacrifice.

5. Don't let troubles damage your faith if you can help it. Sometimes life is hard, it hurts us and bad stuff happens. I spoke to a 17 year-old recently who said he couldn't go to church at the moment because his grandad had died and he was struggling with how God had allowed it. I affirmed him, told him we were there for him - but also said that when bad stuff happens we have a choice to let it affect us positively or negatively. Don't let your faith which is forever be damaged by what is temporary but I've been there and know it's tough. Get people around to support.

6. God wants you to hear his teaching (that means being open and ready), have an honest heart (that means right living), obey God (do what God says), be patient (that means waiting for God's timing and it's hard) but if you do this he promises that you will produce good God-fruit (that means doing amazing stuff for God, seeing lives and communities changed).

7. Go for it. All this talk of sowing - but we have to actually do it. The farmer threw down the seed. We have to throw down God's seed - that is ourselves as Jesus' disciples and God's Word.