

Why did jesus so often teach in parables religion essay



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The Parables are perhaps the most characteristic aspect in the teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels. They have upon them, taken as whole, the stamp of a highly individual mind, in spite of the re-handling they have certainly suffered in the course of transmission. The typical parable, whether it is a simple metaphor, or a more elaborate similitude, or a full length story, presents one single point of comparison. The details are not intended to have independent significance. At its simplest the Parable is a metaphor or a simile drawn from nature or common life, interesting the hearer by its brilliance or strangeness and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise purpose to tease it into active thought, they illustrate a moral or a religious lesson. Jesus' parables have been called "heavenly stories with earthly meanings". (Shoaf, 1993)

The Parables are generally regarded as among the sayings which we can confidently put down to the historical Jesus; they are mostly, authentic words of Jesus. Additionally, all the greatest themes of Jesus' preaching are struck in the Parables. Perhaps no part of the Gospels, then, can better put us in touch with the mind of Jesus Christ than the Parables. These little stories, together with the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes are the best known of Jesus' words. It is a measure of the value which the Church places upon them that every Parable occurs in the Sunday lectionary readings.

The Parable moves away from the sensitive and controversial issue, the religious or moral question and on to fresh terrain – a story. The story, taken from ordinary experience, does not at first resemble too obviously the matter at issue; the Parable therefore avoids provoking a defensive reaction in hearers. Often the Parable reflects the points of view. This is especially

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evident in the Parables which present two contrasting characters or group; one of these represents Jesus' view point and we assume the other stands for the audience's. The listener is drawn into the story. As it develops, the view of Jesus emerges as preferable to the other. The audience is invited to take sides and indeed to adopt the narrator's viewpoint. The listener is led to see things from a fresh perspective. The Parable then moves from the story level to the religious or ethical subject under discussion. The Parable has made it possible for the hearer's mind to be opened to new understanding.

Jesus used Parables because he was a teacher—a brilliant teacher. He spoke in terms that his audience could easily relate to and understand, he was a story teller. His teaching reveals a person very much in touch with nature. By using beautiful images from nature, Jesus was instructing his followers that today has enough of its own. If we take care of the important matters of life, the less important will take care of themselves. Parables of vineyards, tenant farmers and straying sheep easily resonated in the experience of an agricultural and pastoral people. He had an imaginative mind which expressed a sense of awe and mystery in the wonders of the natural phenomena, as witnessed by the following quote: “ The wind blows where it will. You hear the sound that it makes but you do not know where it comes from, or where it goes. So it is with everyone begotten of the Spirit” (Jn3: 8)

Three Parables of Jesus particularly drive home the message of God's loving mercy for us. Collectively they are called the “ three lost Parables” and appear in Luke. They are among the most familiar Parables known to Christians, but their very familiarity often makes us take their simple

message for granted. We should note the scenario of these Parables: – The <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-jesus-so-often-teach-in-parables-religion-essay/>

Parable of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep and the Lost (prodigal) Son. The Pharisees and Scribes had come to Jesus and were murmuring about his associating with sinners. Jesus told the Parables not only to justify his actions but to explain the great love his Father has for all. Jesus was trying to tell us through these Parables of love and mercy that no matter what we do through life, no matter how we let ourselves down, no matter how many disappointments we bring to others and to our Father, he for one will always stand ready awaiting us with open arms just as the father in the Parable.

In the Parable of the sower (Mark: 1-34), we note that Jesus is alone with his disciples and some faithful followers. We also note that the sower is not the centre of attention in the story-it is the seeds, where they fall and what happens to them that we focus. Some seeds fall on a path, others on the hard ground, and some among thorns and some on good soil. In each case there is a different result-only seeds that fall on the good soil will thrive. In our own lives we can be shallow minded, hard- hearted, preoccupied with the material things, even be wronged. Jesus tells us that such things hinder the growth of faith, preventing us from getting to know God. This could be taken as a reminder to us all that all in life will not be perfect. In the Parable of the Lamp (Mk. 4; 21-45), we see that Jesus is not in the business of hiding his light: " what is hidden will be disclosed." This line suggests the mystery exists relative to timing: hidden now, will be disclosed. The obstruction to understanding is, ironically, the means of understanding: the mental structure of time. Little wonder that Jesus should say, " Listen then, if you have ears." It is interesting that the Gospel of John does not use the word ' parable' - the good shepherd and the women in travail are similar to shorter

parables in Matthew, Mark and Luke. There are many parables that take the same form as longer parables in other Gospels yet Jesus' unique style of teaching is still apparent. (<http://www.jesus.org/life-of-jesus/parables>)

When Jesus taught in Parables, he illustrated the reality of the “ Kingdom of God”. He implied that Kingdom was present even in minute things. The contrast between insignificant beginning and mighty achievement is striking. The stress in the Parable of the sower was on the divine miracle and lack of human influence in the process of growth. If we read the Parable of the mustard seed-we see that it becomes the greatest bush and so will the Kingdom of God become the greatest Kingdom.

A Parable tells the story in a delightful way, yet clever. It is telling a story that is both disturbing and challenging, a story about life and death, the fate of the world and thus the faith of the listener. As such the meaning of the Parable towards the listener is one of great seriousness. The Parable has brought considerable storytelling capacity to the task of challenging the listener to think in new way about life, to have faith, to embrace the new reality and to gain the courage to live this new life despite fear. When Jesus preached so strikingly in Parables, He did not create a new literary genre. Rather he made brilliant use of a genre which was already of long tradition and which was familiar too all throughout the Mediterranean world. In Greece and Rome, Parables were employed by Rhetoricians, Politicians and Philosophers. Jesus used Parables to enforce and illustrate the idea that the Kingdom of God had come upon men there and then. The inconceivable had happened: history had become the vehicle of the eternal; the absolute was clothed with flesh and blood. Admittedly it was a mystery, “ to be understood <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-jesus-so-often-teach-in-parables-religion-essay/>

by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, by those to whom it is revealed" not by flesh and blood, but by the Father in heaven. It is in this context that the Parables of the Kingdom of God must be placed. The Parable was an earnest gesture on the part of Jesus towards the audience. It was a speech-art which truly involved speaker and hearer in communication.

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