

Jesus is a most caring and most earnest Man and preacher, and His speaking in parables brings this out. There is nothing as important and urgent as you and me rightly hearing and responding to the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do you realize this and do you make it a matter of earnest prayer regularly? The purpose of Jesus' teaching with parables was further to attract and awaken His hearers to come to Him and be saved and to walk in His ways and stay in His paths. Jesus earnestly preached, using also parables, because He knew that only with Him is salvation rich and free, and to live apart from Him is death - spiritual, physical and eternal death! How often didn't Jesus say also with His parables at the end, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" You find this expression twice also in Matthew 13 and it brings out Jesus' earnestness in His gospel teaching. If Jesus is so earnest in giving His Word, will you not be earnest in hearing His Word?

The text gives such incentive to be earnest and to take care to hear God's Word and ask about it more and learn from it all we can, for notice how blessed the disciples were in so doing. Jesus in speaking with parables proves to be not only a most caring Man and preacher and a most earnest Man and preacher, but it also shows Him to be such a great Man and preacher. The parables of Jesus, the more than 30 He told altogether, tell all of so rich and gracious a Saviour for us, so ready to help and ready to forgive and ready to strengthen, and ready to bless! In verse 16, Jesus says to His disciples who were hearing and receiving Jesus' gospel teaching, including that given in His parables, *Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear!* And then Jesus brings out that to know the full gospel message and to hear it from the Lord Jesus Christ as He came in the fullness of time to give His life on behalf of sinners and bring about salvation, and open the doors of the kingdom of heaven to all who would hear His voice and repent and believe, there is nothing that could compare to this blessing.

As we hear the gospel message and study in the weeks to come the parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, may it lead us truly and more and more into the riches of the kingdom of God in and through Christ Jesus. May God the Holy Spirit bring much fruit on Jesus' parables also still in our times. Amen.

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BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

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Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



JESUS SPEAKING IN PARABLES

In the next few weeks we will be studying Matthew 13, a gospel chapter with no less than seven parables from Jesus. In this message we will just think about Jesus preaching by way of parables. Do you know what parables are? And why did Jesus speak in this way?

Maybe you have heard before that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. That is true, but there is more to say about parables. A parable is a story told in a way that draws you yourself into it, even without you knowing it perhaps. The parables of Jesus are special stories with a convicting spiritual purpose, forcing us to ask the question, "Where do I fit in all this? What is my relation to the kingdom of God?" Parables are stories where Jesus takes what is well known and places it alongside that which is not well known, in order to explain it and apply it in a clear and pointed manner. The power of parables is that they help make gospel truths more concrete or real, and they can make it more interesting. Who doesn't like stories, and also parables? These gospel stories can be easier to remember and they can be repeatedly told and drawn from and applied. Parables, in other words, are a very special means of preaching and applying the gospel.

So let us think now about Jesus preaching by way of parables as we are told in verse 3, *He spoke many things unto them in parables.* What kind of preacher does it prove Him to be? Jesus preaching with parables shows to us what a caring Man and preacher He was, and what an earnest Man and preacher He was, and what a great Man and preacher He was.

That Jesus was a most caring Man and preacher we can know from the setting of this chapter itself. Jesus may very well have left the house where He had been preaching and teaching just to get a break of sorts, but when the people followed Him and many more were added to them, He decided to make use of the opportunity and preach to them some more. And Jesus preaching now in parables brings out how He really desired to come across to them in a way that they would hear and understand what He had to say. Jesus, we can say, went out of His way time and again not only to preach the gospel but to do so in a way that would capture the ears and hearts of His hearers. Jesus used different approaches and styles in His preaching to reach all in His audiences. Jesus speaking in parables was meant to attract all His hearers to the gospel, younger and older, and it was another means "to win men to that which was fitted to secure their happiness, but to which they were

naturally disinclined.” Jesus used parables “to circumvent and disarm the prejudices of the Jews against Him, and to draw them into His gospel message” so that they were clearly and lovingly confronted with the call of the gospel.

In this Bible passage with Jesus speaking parables, we see a Man and preacher Who is most caring indeed. Caring for all His hearers and caring to bring across the gospel message in as clear and appealing and faithful and compelling manner as possible

How we should love Jesus the Savior for His preaching not only, but also for His different ways of bringing the Word, and not least also for His parables concerning the kingdom of heaven. Does the fact that He spoke many things in parables attract you to Jesus the Saviour? It surely should! Even just this fact that He spoke also in parables should make so clear to us that Jesus is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to Him in repentance, trusting Him alone, and be saved.

Saying that brings me also to our second main point where we see Jesus speaking in parables proves Him to be not only a most caring Man and preacher, but also such an earnest Man and preacher. For this point we need to think about Jesus’ answer to His disciples when they ask in Matthew 13:10 why Jesus spoke in parables to them. In a certain way, Jesus’ answer in the verses 10-15 may seem disturbing to us but we should see in them such a call to hear the gospel message and not to be indifferent or hardened against it whenever we hear it.

What does Jesus teach in the verses 10-15? He makes clear in these verses that with all His Word, and especially now also with the parables, there is always a twofold effect. Either the Word leaves you broken and receptive or hardened and resistant. Jesus here tells us that while speaking in parables will serve to draw those who will listen more into the gospel and kingdom of God, it will have the opposite effect on those who are defiant and resistant against Christ and His gospel message. Jesus never spoke parables with the express purpose to harden the hearts of the unbelieving and those hostile against Him, but Jesus did speak parables to serve for the hostile and repeatedly unbelieving, as a veil to the gospel, as a punishment for their ongoing resistance to the gospel. In actual fact what Jesus is saying in our text passage, quoting also from the Old Testament in these verses, is that His preaching with parables was also for this purpose that those who will not believe may be all the more exposed as those who have hardened their hearts against Him, and who come therefore under His just judgment and condemnation for all their willfully blind and stubborn resistance against Him.

Be sure you misinterpret Jesus’ reason for using parables if you think He did it expressly to harden some of His hearers’ hearts, because ‘after all He didn’t really want them to be saved.’ Don’t think Jesus adopted the parable method to make some of His hearers insensible to

divine truth. No, in all Jesus’ preaching and ministry He sought to win His hearers’ hearts and to awaken them to the only gospel message. John 3:17 very clearly states, *God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* And in Luke 19:10 we read *the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* With this in mind Jesus also preached His parables, but He knew His preaching would have a twofold fruit and that His parables also would make all the more clear those who were receptive to the truth and those who were rejecters of the truth. Jesus’ parables would expose those hardened against Him and would make clear those who were truly listening to Him. In Mark 4:33 we read that with many parables Jesus spoke the word to them *as they were able to hear it*, telling us Jesus’ purpose in telling parables was not to confuse the people but to challenge sincere seekers to discover the meaning of His words. For those who would not be sincere seekers, Jesus makes clear, the parables would just leave them in further blindness and darkness.

So we may say Jesus speaking in parables proves Him to be such an earnest Man and preacher. Jesus knew He was speaking on matters of life and death, matters affecting our eternal wellbeing or our eternal death and His preaching in parables now was, as it were, Jesus speaking in yet more concentrated manner the gospel and bringing out more than ever the seriousness of the gospel message. What a fearful thing it is to live in more or less indifference and hardness to the gospel message, for doing so, if continued, will result only in more hardness over time so that even the simple parables won’t speak to you or interest you, but only leave you blinder still and more condemned than ever. Hearing also Jesus’ words that the parables, while having blessed effect on all who will hear, will have further blinding and condemning effect on all those who will not hear, how these words should lead to the cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner...and whatever happens in my life, don’t let me be one who will not hear Your Word, but give to me what was given to the disciples to hear and understand the gospel and see and perceive it as the gospel desperately needed by me, and most wonderful also for me!”

How we should be afraid of hardness of heart over against all of God’s Word, and any and all lack of interest in the gospel message and Jesus’ words about the kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven. It is both a very irresponsible and most dangerous way to react to God’s Word. Are you more afraid of hardness of heart before God and His Word than anything else? Or are the things you are afraid of only things of this life, like not getting a good job, or being afraid of not being accepted by others, or being afraid of snakes and spiders. Sure, it is normal to be afraid of those things, but are you most afraid of what comes so naturally to us, left to ourselves, that is, not hearing and receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth?