



Roberto D. Badenas wrote a paper entitled “Teaching Through Parables: Following Jesus.

In a portion of a middle section, he sets aside some time to analyze why Jesus would make the stories we call parables so special?

1. First of all, they are built on an element of surprise. It is not frequent, nor normal, to excuse oneself for declining an invitation of the king to a royal wedding banquet by claiming that one has bought some oxen that need to be tried out just at that moment! It is not frequent or common that the owner of a business should pay the same salary to the workers who have worked one hour as to those who have worked twelve! The parables are full of mysteries. They teach as much through evidence as through extravagance. Very often their intention is to surprise.
2. Second, the parables make it easier to establish unexpected connections. The parable is built on characters, images and situations already known by the listeners, allowing the storyteller to establish, in a very natural way, unexpected links with new ideas or situations. The art of metaphor rests precisely in the capacity of establishing comparisons between ideas and situations that, at first sight, do not have much in common, thus revealing unexpected truths, and new aspects of reality.
3. The fact of appealing more directly to the imagination than to reason, allows the parable to open more easily the door which leads to the mysterious inner world, in which everyone builds his/her own view of reality, without the pressures, obstacles, complexes and preconceptions of the exterior world. Through fantasy, the parable helps the receiver to visualize abstract notions and new realities that the spirit is able to conceive and that would be impossible to reach by another way.
4. The narrative language is excellent for contacts and relations. The message easily reaches its target when the listener identifies his/her own experience with the story told. This is why stories and anecdotes are much more efficient than direct orders to produce change in reluctant persons. A good story may replace with certain advantages, and in a much more elegant way, all the advice that we are inclined to give and that so often is not immediately welcomed. The mind of the listener, as soon as it captures the message, naturally acknowledges by itself its final intention without needing somebody to dictate it. The solution to the problem comes spontaneously just by presenting it in a different way by means of a comparison:
 - This is like sewing a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. This does not work. You need a new coat! (Mt 9:16-17).
 - There are moments when one wonders how to face tomorrow. Look at the birds. They do not worry... Are you not much more valuable than they? Why worry about problems that you will probably never have, or that God will finally solve? (Mt 6:25-26).
5. Parables and anecdotes have a seductive effect because they do not impose anything, they do not threaten. The audience has to wait until the end of the story to discover how its lesson applies to his/her personal case. This way of indirect communication respects the autonomy of the listener, leaving him/her the space of freedom necessary to establish by him/herself the connection between the story told and his own situation. Used rightly, parables, stories and anecdotes have a powerful effect. They are able to overcome, in the simplest way,

our natural resistance and self-defense mechanisms, appealing to our best common sense. To a hesitant, insecure and fearful person, Jesus may say:

"It is difficult to plow the field looking back at the same time. If you really want to go forward, stop looking through the rear-view mirror." (Luke 9 :62)

This type of indirect message has more chances to be accepted than a direct rebuke. To say, "It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick" (Mt 9:12), is wiser and more tactful than saying, for example, "This is not your business"...

6. Many of the illustrations used by Jesus belong to the category of "self-evident metaphors". Their premises work on a hidden form of truism enveloped in an almost irrefutable argument. This is useful for giving advice in an indirect way, because it does not hurt the individual nor interfere with his/her liberty. It is formulated just as a description of reality:

- "If the salt loses its saltiness...it is no longer good for anything." (Mt 6 :13)
- "People do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl. They put it on its stand." (Mt 5:15)
- "You recognize trees by their fruit." (Mt 7:16-20)

These statements arouse spontaneously the immediate agreement of listeners, thus avoiding controversy. Since they are logically unquestionable, they are much more efficient than any kind of argumentation, or than any sermonizing. The strength of their impact rests in their ability to convince the listener without imposing anything.

This is the case for many parables, but not for all. Some are really controversial, and some are even comparable to delayed weapons. Joachim Jeremias calls these parables "weapons of war." They are intended to reach a target that may hurt the receivers in their aim to make them to surrender to God's grace.

7. Jesus knew how to combine in his parable's spirituality, ethics and aesthetics. In order to touch the conscience of his listeners while respecting the complexities of the human mind, he was a master at the craft of bringing together deep thinking and the beauty of art. As with any good artist, Jesus relied heavily on inspiration. He had his own personal way of looking at reality, with his own perspective and his own viewpoint. His stories have a mirror effect and help us to see ourselves from God's point of view. This is why they were as fascinating for his first listeners as they are for us today.

The Disciples asked Jesus directly about parables in Matthew 13:

Disciples: 10 Why do You speak to the people in parables?

Jesus: 11 The knowledge of the secrets of heaven has been given to you, but it has not been given to them.

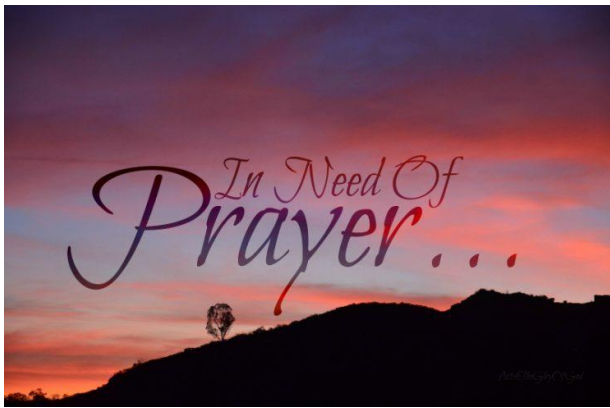
12 Those who have something will be given more—and they will have abundance. Those who have nothing will lose what they have—*they will be destitute*. **13** I teach in parables so the people may look but not see, listen but not hear or understand. (Psalm 78:2)

Lord, we have to be surprised or comforted. We have to make new connections or support known connections. Our hearts need to be built up and restored or torn down and transformed - by You. Grant to us Your wisdom and courage to take up our crosses and follow. Amen.

Pastor David Gardner



In my Sunday sermon I asked, "Can I get an Amen?" The church is voting on it Wednesday night."



Jimmie Bruner – Emergency life threatening Surgery
Courtney – Continued prayers for the Allred’s 11 yr. old grandchild with neurological issues.
Connie Green – Louise Golden’s sister needing to find work.
Sara Riggs – for strength to keep going one day at a time. Serenity to accept the things she cannot change.
Parker Bowles – Strengthened Faith

Mary Branch – to see the positive in all things

Donna and Tarah Frye – travel mercies

Thomas – Dr on Feb. 26th

Lydia’s grandma – continued prayers for recovery after her heart attack

Major Marvin Asche - Amber Oklahoma Police Department. He received a gunshot wound while subduing a suspect.

Martha Burger – Loss of her husband Bud

Junior Brown – Recovering from Surgery from Lung Cancer

Pipkin Family

Family and Friends of Aimee Greening

Billy Branch – Travel Mercies

Stacy Mettler – Cancer – Surgery Complications

Ann Johnson – Recovering from Hip Surgery

Oleta Little – On Hospice. Brain Cancer returned

Addie McMurrin

Ross Pipkin – Basic Training

Dave and Margie Robertson

Marcia’s circumstances dealing with health, surgery, housing and work

Jason Poorman – (Edith Suiters nephew) chemo for Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma

Addie’s friend and relative on Hospice. Peace in her Family

Kathy Allred – Continued prayers for healing

Trish Lister – Continued prayers

Lisa Hill – loss of her mom

Jim and Edith Suiter – Jim is getting increasingly weary

Karen Gibson – Cancer

Gary Gibson – Cancer

Jan Smith – Cancer

Jennifer Shahan – Heart Problems

Iva Johnson – Hospice

Karen Stanfill – Cancer

Rebecca’s cousin has eating disorder, liver failure and on transplant list

Kathy Bridges – Cancer

Joe Perry – Kidney cancer

Margaret Averre – Throat cancer

Daniel Whittney – Colon cancer; now liver cancer

Jennifer Allred – Spinal pain and fibromyalgia

Melinda Douglas – Lung Cancer

