

Thesis: After the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul, he changed his preaching style. He started to rely more on parables. A parable is a story “thrown alongside” a spiritual truth. Parables are meant to reveal (to the open-minded) and conceal (to the closed-minded) this underlying divine truth. We should take great care in interpreting them.

Support: Matthew 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10

I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b. Welcome Alyssa.

2. Introduction

- a. In **Matthew 12:22ff**, Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute.
 - i. The people were amazed and began to ask themselves, “Can this be the Son of David?”
 - I. Is this the Messiah? Is this the promised Christ?
 - ii. The Pharisees saw what was happening and said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.”
 1. They attempted to discredit Jesus and the miracle he had just performed.
 2. Rather than acknowledging he cast out demons by the Spirit of God, they attempted to say he cast out demons with power of Satan.
 - iii. Obviously, this was illogical and preposterous.
 1. Jesus rightly pointed out that a divided kingdom cannot stand.
 2. Moreover, they believed their own disciples were able to cast out demons.
 - a. Why weren’t they accusing them of casting out demons by the power of Satan as well?
 - b. The Pharisees were being inconsistent.
 3. Lastly, by casting out demons, Jesus was defeating Satan, not helping him.
 - a. He was binding the strong man, enabling him to plunder his goods.
 - b. He was not freeing Satan; he was binding him.
 4. The fact of the matter was that Jesus was casting out demons by the Spirit of God, indicating that his kingdom was near.
 - a. By attributing his power to Satan rather than to the Holy Spirit, the Pharisees were blaspheming the Holy Spirit, a sin which would not be forgiven.
 - b. They would not enter the kingdom of God.
- b. Needless to say, tension filled the air.
 - i. The Pharisees and scribes hated Jesus, and this confrontation added to their disdain.
 - ii. Jesus, because of their hard and evil hearts, calls them a “brood of vipers” (**12:34**) and “an evil and adulterous generation” (**12:39**).
 - I. This was an intense situation!



- c. Yet, not everybody was like the Pharisees and the scribes.
 - i. He had his disciples.
 - ii. He had others who were being convinced by his message and miracles.
 - 1. He was the Messiah.
 - 2. His kingdom was at hand.
 - d. Jesus was at a crossroads of sorts.
 - i. He had to continue to preach and teach for the benefit of his disciples and the crowds.
 - ii. At the same time, however, the religious elite hated him, and they would be listening carefully to his words in an attempt to trap him.
 - e. Albert Einstein once said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."
 - i. Jesus realized couldn't continue to do the same thing over and over again.
 - 1. Otherwise, he'd end up with unending series of confrontations.
 - 2. His message might have been lost.
 - a. He adapted his preaching style.
 - f. Notice the change in **Matthew 13:1-3a**:
 - i. ¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables...
 - 1. Many scholars believe that same day, after he healed the demon-possessed man and after he had the run in with the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus began to preach and teach once again.
 - 2. This time, however, "he told them many things in parables" (**13:3**).
 - a. Jesus changed his preaching style.
 - i. Prior to this time, he taught plainly.
 - ii. From this day forward, more and more of his preaching was done in the form of parables.
- 3. This morning, let us consider the parables of Jesus. Next week, Lord willing, we will study a specific parable: the Parable of the Sower, the parable that contains the key to understanding the others. If you have not already done so, please open your Bibles to Matthew 13. Let us look together at Matthew 13:10-17, our primary text this morning.**

¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?"

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.'

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.¹⁷ 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.

4. **This morning, I'd like to answer three main questions regarding parables and Jesus' use of them.**

5. **First, What?: What is a parable?**

a. Our English word parable is a transliteration of the compound Greek word *parabolē* [par-ab-ol-ay].

i. *Para* means "alongside."

1. *Bole* is the noun form of the word meaning "to throw."

2. *Parabole* literally means, "that which is thrown alongside" (Roper).

a. This word is related to our English word parallel.

i. Parallel lines are two lines drawn alongside each other.

3. A parable, therefore, is a story that is "thrown alongside" a spiritual truth.

ii. BDAG defines the word like this, "a narrative or saying of varying length, designed to illustrate a truth especially through comparison or simile, *comparison, illustration, parable, proverb, maxim.*"

iii. Mounce adds, "A 'parable' is a story from everyday life used to illustrate a moral or religious truth."

iv. Others have said, "A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

v. Generally speaking, a parable has two parts "thrown alongside" each other.

1. The spoken story.

2. Unspoken spiritual truth.

b. To make this more concrete, let us consider the Parable of the Hidden Treasure in **13:44**.

i. ⁴⁴ "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."

I. The spoken story is straightforward.

a. A man finds a hidden treasure in a field.

b. He covers it back up.

c. He sells everything he has, buys the field, and secures the treasure.

i. But if that is all you get out of the parable, you are missing the point.

ii. You are missing the unspoken spiritual truth that Jesus was really trying to get at.

1. Jesus tells the story to reveal something about the kingdom of heaven.

2. We'll consider its interpretation in a few minutes.



- c. A parable is a spoken story (earthly story) “thrown alongside” an unspoken spiritual truth (heavenly meaning).

6. Second, Why?: Why did Jesus use parables?

- a. This was the burning question for the disciples as well.
 - i. **13:10**, “¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”
 - ii. Jesus provides the answer in **13:11-17**. He taught in parables for two reasons – one positive and one negative.
 - I. Let us consider the positive first. Jesus used parables to reveal truth to the open-minded.
 - a. **13:11-12**, “¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.”
 - i. Jesus tells his disciples that secrets (mysteries) of the kingdom of heaven had been and would continue to be revealed to them.
 - ii. Prior to this time, Jesus tended to preach plainly, and people either accepted or rejected his teaching based on the condition of their heart.
 - 1. Those that were open-minded, like the disciples, accepted his teaching.
 - 2. Those that were closed-minded or hard-hearted, like the Pharisees, scribes, and others, rejected his teaching.
 - a. But now the latter group was aggressively opposing him.
 - iii. Jesus wanted to continue to reveal truth to the open-minded, but now he veiled this truth in parables.
 - 1. The open-minded would ponder and try to understand the spiritual truths described in the parables.
 - 2. In so doing, these people would be given more and more divine truth, and they would have an abundance (**13:12**).
 - 3. They would be in envious position because of their seeing eyes and hearing hears.
 - a. Many prophets and righteous people (from times past) longed to see what they saw and hear what they heard (**13:16-17**).
 - b. Parables allowed Jesus to continue to reveal truth to the soft-hearted.
 - 2. Jesus also had a negative reason for speaking in parables. They concealed truth to the closed-minded. Jesus says in **13:13-15**:

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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.'

iii. The Pharisees and scribes and others rejected the plain teaching of Jesus and attributed his miracles to the power of Satan.

I. Their hearts were dull and hard.

a. Their ears and eyes may have worked fine physically, but because of the hardness of their hearts, they didn't hear, see, or understand Jesus and his message.

b. They didn't listen to Jesus to learn divine truth.

i. Rather, they listened to him to try to trap him.

ii. They aggressively opposed Jesus.

2. Realizing their intentions, Jesus changed up his preaching style to parables, since they weren't going to benefit from his teaching anyways.

a. Parables were a judgment against the hard hearted.

b. When his opponents and the closed-minded heard these parables, all they heard were quaint little stories that made no sense to them whatsoever.

i. Their hearts were hardened further.

ii. Even what they had would be taken away (**13:12**).

iii. Furthermore, the spiritual truths embedded within the parables remained concealed to them and gave them little ammunition against Jesus.

b. In effect, parables further separated the good and honest hearts from the hardened hearts.

i. In them, spiritual truth continued to be revealed to the former but remained concealed to the latter.

7. Third, How?: How should we interpret parables?

a. One third of Jesus' teaching in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is in the form of parables (one third of his teaching, therefore, is veiled), so it is important to understand how to interpret them.

i. Remember, a parable is a spoken story "thrown alongside" an unspoken spiritual truth.

1. The challenge is to discern and figure out the unspoken spiritual truth.

2. We do this in three steps.

a. First, understand the story.



- b. Second, determine the basic spiritual subject matter addressed in the parable.
 - c. Third, place the story and the subject matter side by side and compare them; the earthly story should reveal a spiritual truth about the heavenly concept.
 - ii. Let's apply this to the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (**13:44**), “⁴⁴ "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.”
 - 1. The story is easy to understand.
 - a. A man finds a treasure in a field.
 - b. He covers it back up.
 - c. He sells all he has to buy the field so as obtain the treasure.
 - i. This is the earthly story.
 - 2. Jesus tells us the spiritual subject matter.
 - a. The story relates somehow to the kingdom of heaven.
 - 3. Placing them side by side, it is easily seen that Jesus is talking about the surpassing value of the kingdom of heaven.
 - a. He uses this parable to illustrate just how valuable the kingdom of heaven is.
 - b. It is so valuable that we should be willing to part with all we have to obtain it.
- b. Because parables are figures of speech veiling spiritual truth, it is important to know how to interpret them.

8. Conclusion

- a. On Jesus' so-called busy day, he cast out a demon from a blind and mute man.
 - i. The people were amazed and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”
 - ii. Because of the hardness of their hearts, the Pharisees rejected this notion and accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan.
- b. Obviously, this allegation was illogical and nonsensical.
 - i. These words proved the hardness of their hearts.
 - 1. They weren't hearing Jesus' message.
 - 2. They rejected his miracles as divine.
 - 3. They were not interested in learning the truth.
 - 4. In fact, they were aggressively opposing the truth, looking to trap Jesus in his words.
- c. So Jesus changed his preaching style and relied more heavily on parables.
 - i. Parables are spoken stores “thrown alongside” unspoken spiritual truths; they are earthly stories with heaven meanings.
 - ii. Parables both revealed and concealed spiritual truth.
 - 1. Truth was revealed to those with open minds.
 - 2. However, it remained concealed to those with hard hearts.
 - iii. Because truth is veiled in parables, and they are a third of Jesus' teaching in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, proper interpretation of them is important.
 - 1. First, understand the story.
 - 2. Second, determine the basic spiritual subject addressed.

3. Third, place them side and side and compare them; in so doing, you should be able to ascertain the unspoken spiritual truth.

9. Invitation

- a. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure teaches that the kingdom of heaven is infinitely valuable.
 - i. In the next parable, Jesus reemphasizes this point. He says, “⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (**Matthew 13:45-46**).
 1. The kingdom of heaven is like a vast treasure; it is like a pearl of great value.
 2. The sacrifice and cost of being a part of it pale in comparison to its intrinsic worth.
 3. Let me ask you this question, “Have you laid a hold of your treasure?”
 4. If not, why won't you be added to the Lord's kingdom today?
- b. If you believe Jesus in the Christ, the Son of the living God, you can be added to his spiritual kingdom. Express this faith:
 - i. Repentance.
 - ii. Confession.
 - iii. Immersion.
- c. At the point of immersion, the scripture says your sins are forgiven, you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, and you are added to the kingdom.
- d. If you are ready to obey the gospel this morning or you have a care you'd like to bring before the church, won't you please come forward as we stand and sing.
- e. Let us stand and sing.

