

“Now You Are Speaking Plainly”

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables
John 16:25-31

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

- Jesus' self-revelation in the Gospel of John has a cryptic dimension to it. Consider His three “I AM” statements:
 - John 8:58 - “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”
 - ***I am God***
 - John 10:7 - “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”
 - ***I am the Savior***
 - John 10:14 - “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”
 - ***I am known by the righteous***

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

- Yet He cloaks much of His message in puzzles, proverbs, and parables
- Why? If His purpose is to reveal the whole truth of God's will, why does He appear to obscure elements of that message?
- Both Jesus' enemies and His disciples asked the same question

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

- John 10:24 - “Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, ‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’”
- John 16:17-18 - “Then some of His disciples said among themselves, ‘What is this that He says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’? 18 They said therefore, What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.’”

Why Jesus Spoke in Parables

- John 16:25- 31 - “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.’ 29 His disciples said to Him, ‘See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! 30 Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.’ 31 Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?”

Jesus' Words Confused Many

- His words divided His hearers
 - John 10:19-21 - “Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings. 20 And many of them said, ‘He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?’ 21 Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’”
- If Jesus' words aren't producing some kind of division, perhaps people really aren't hearing what He is saying.

Jesus' Words Confused Many

- He taught a revolutionary approach to living.
 - Luke 6:35 - “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”
- Naturally His words are going to divide His hearers. They bring much emotional baggage and inhibiting preconceptions to the table

Jesus' Words Confused Many

- His hearers demanded that He speak openly
 - John 10:24-27 - “Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, ‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ 25 Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.’”
 - John 18:19-21 - “The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. 20 Jesus answered him, ‘I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. 21 Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.’”

Jesus' Words Confused Many

- The fact that Jesus spoke in parables had more to do with the hearers than it had to do with the message
 - Matt. 13:10-17

Jesus' Words Confused Many

- Matt. 13:10-17 - “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ 11 He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ 16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

How To Interpret Jesus' Parables

- In the Greek New Testament, the word parabole is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Hebrews.
- This word is composed of the Greek preposition para, meaning 'alongside,' and bole, meaning 'to throw.'
- Literally parabole means throw something alongside of something else.
- Came to mean an earthly story with a heavenly meaning
- It is not found in John. God inspired John to use another Greek word, paroimia, three times in his Gospel account: John 10:6, 16:25, 29.
- Paroimia means 'brief saying' or 'proverb.'

How To Interpret Jesus' Parables

- Jesus began to use parables only after large crowds gathered to hear Him speak
- He had two purposes:
 - Reveal the truth to disciples
 - Conceal the message from enemies
- Why did disciples have a hard time understanding parables?
 - They had their own traditions and predispositions.
 - His message was often not what even they wanted to hear.

The Essential Role of the Context

- The correct approach to interpreting what has been said or written begins with understanding of the context in which it was said or written.
- The word 'context' is composed of 'con' meaning together and 'textus' meaning woven. The context of a statement or group of statements is literally that with which they are woven.

The Essential Role of the Context

- Local Context
 - The circumstances in which the statement was made
 - The subject under discussion
 - The relationship between the speaker or writer and those to whom the message is directed
 - What has been said and/or done by both the speaker and those to whom the message is addressed before the statements were made

The Essential Role of the Context

- Larger Context
 - The book in which the statement or statements are found
 - The Testament (Old or New) of which they are a part
 - The total harmonic message of the Bible

The Context of Jesus' Parables

- Parables must not be treated as if they were isolated religious or moral teachings. They must be studied in the settings in which Jesus spoke them.
- When a parable is used, the similarities between the two things compared are limited.
- Parables must be interpreted by the rest of the New Testament's teachings, not interpret the New Testament by what a parable can be made to mean.

The Context of Jesus' Parables

- We are trying to understand parables from a 21st Century American point of view and style of learning. Figures of speech can be confusing to persons from another society.
- Jesus was using parables to accomplish specific purposes. A parable usually has only one point. It is just an illustration to make a point. Not every detail of the things being compared in the analogy is comparable with something else.
- Sometimes Jesus clearly exaggerated or used hyperbole to make His point
 - Luke 18:25 - “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Did Jesus Speak Clearly?

- The answer to that question depends on you and what you believe about Him.
 - Mark 4:9-13, 22-25 - “And He said to them, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’ 10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, ‘To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’ 13 And He said to them, ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’... 22 ‘For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ 24 Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 ‘For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.’”

Did Jesus Speak Clearly?

- Matt. 17:5 - “While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”
- Acts 10:33 - “Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”
- Rom. 10:17 - “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
- Heb. 3:7-8 - “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness”
- Rev. 13:9 - “If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”