

Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?

Matthew 13:1–23

(black Bibles page 818; Children’s Bibles page 1178)

Why did Jesus teach in parables? Jesus’ answer is rather startling.

[1] Jesus gives the Parable of the Sower (13:1–9)

Why does Jesus teach from a boat?

- “... lest they crush him, for he had healed many...” (Mark 3:9–10; also Luke 12:1)

How did Jesus think of “crowds”?

- *With “compassion”!* See Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32.
- *Yet the crowds could be a problem.* Sometimes he would elude them intentionally. Sometimes Jesus called them “evil” for demanding a sign (Luke 11:29), or merely seeking another free meal from him! (John 6:24–26)

[2] Why speak in parables to the crowds, Jesus? (13:10–17)

- Jesus’ answer: ‘Because they don’t hear, they *won’t* hear, and so I’ll give them stories they won’t understand.’ See verses 13:11, 13.
- Some objections we might have to this
- Here’s where it gets very interesting: only the disciples received the interpretation of the parable, right? But reading the Bible *so do you!*
 - And through Bible publication *anyone* can read Jesus’ interpretation. This is like the crowds hearing what they weren’t supposed to hear!?

- These things were one day meant to be available to all. Jesus’ words were to go into the *public domain*.
 - “What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops” (Matthew 10:27).
 - After all is accomplished – confusing things, like Jesus’ suffering and resurrection, which even the disciples couldn’t understand – there is to be an open proclamation of all that Jesus said and did.
 - This is one reason why the apostles didn’t teach in parables themselves.
- Much more could be said about Jesus and his genius use of parables, like sometimes his parables were *intentionally* clear (the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13–21, or the Tenants in Mark 12:1–12)

[3] The meaning of the parable of the sower (13:18–23)

The four soils:

1. “Jesus talks about farmers sowing seed. I don’t get it. I have other things to do.”
2. “I so appreciate the love and warmth and affirmation that I hear in Jesus’ voice. But my co-workers have been mocking me for the Bible verses posted in my cubicle, and for going to church. Those are my friends. I didn’t sign up for this. Hmm... maybe I can find some positive things said by people other than Jesus...”
3. “I’m so busy. Kids have to eat, you know. And of course I need my regular free time to keep my sanity – thank you, video games – and the occasional vacation. Don’t get me wrong, I still get to church when I can...”
4. This person “understands” and “bears fruit”!