

March 20-26, 2023

Matthew 13; Luke 8; 13

“WHO HATHE EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR”

Summary: *Matthew 13. Jesus explains why He teaches with parables—He gives the parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea—A prophet is not honored by his own people.*

Luke 8. Jesus gives and interprets the parable of the sower—He stills the tempest; casts out a legion of devils, who then enter the swine; heals a woman of an issue of blood; and raises Jairus's daughter from death.

Luke 13. Jesus teaches, Repent or perish—He gives the parable of the barren fig tree, heals a woman on the Sabbath, and likens the kingdom of God to a mustard seed—He discusses whether few or many are saved and laments over Jerusalem.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What has God given me to learn with?

Three tools of
learning that God

gave us are seeing (visual), hearing (audio) and feeling (kinesthetic). One of the ways of recognizing these meta-programs (human perception modes) is in the words we use to describe our reactions: “I see,” “Sounds right to me,” “I feel all right about this.” “. . . then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (**Genesis 3:5**) “And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.” (**Deuteronomy 5:1**) “Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.” (**Ecclesiastes 8:5**) Isaiah used simple words as metaphors to reach those who can see, those who can hear, and those who perceive. “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (**Isaiah 6:10**) Please note the chiasmus: heart, ears, eyes, then

eyes, ears, heart. The center point being eyes; Isaiah is giving us an “insight.” Advertising experts appeal to our eyes, make it sound right, and have us feel the worth of their products. These are the most powerful meta-programs to teach about and experience life, Eternal Life.

What may help me to see the Parable of the Sower better?

Around the eastern and northern shores of the Sea of Galilee are numerous coves. They were created by erosion as the prolific rainfall in the winter months raced downward through small canyons to the lake, drawing the black igneous basalt stone and gravel out past the shoreline. One such cove is very close to Capernaum. There are boulders of stone, choking thorn bushes, and patches of fertile land all situated close to the road that leads to Capernaum, where Jesus lived. People can easily stand around a boat anchored a little way out from the shore in the cove. The water easily reflects the sound of someone speaking from the boat to the audience at some distance from the vessel. This setting of the parable in **Matthew 13** is more understandable than speaking from a boat to a multitude on a straight shoreline. The most significant message in the parable of

the sower is in verse twelve. It is the center of a chiasmic image. It is a message of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The parable uses the wayside, stony place, and the thorns as image points. Then in reverse, consider that the heart was not pricked, the ears were not unplugged (as if stones were in their ears), and their hearts could not understand the way. The inspired translation of that verse makes the lesson of using the gift of the Holy Ghost easier to understand. "For whosoever receiveth to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken even that he hath" (**Matthew 13:12 JST**) There is a modern proverb which repeats the message, "If you don't use it, you'll lose it." By exercising the gift, it expands and grows.

How can a parable increase in meaning?

As life progresses, additional meanings appear. For example, in the Parable of the Sower, the Sower was not deterred, he just kept on sowing. Some seeds produced a little, some more! Italian sociologist and economist Wilfried Fritz Pareto (1848-1923) wrote about the 80/20 connection showing that approximately 80% of Italian land was owned by 20% of the population. Mathematically, the 80/20 rule is also known as a statistics phenomenon in that "80% of sales come from 20% of clients," and the activity done in a Church setting is the same. When you look a little farther it applies to the 20% also, in that 80% of their work is done by 20% of them! Be grateful for the many that do less and the few that do more! The parables Jesus used offered learning experiences on the level of those listening and according to their sense of understanding. Parables are like paintings. They can be studied for more interpretation. Many of Jesus' parables contained references of nature and human experiences.

How do I get meanings from imageries of body, animals, and plant life?

Very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as "the **hand of God**." Such metaphors are examples of how the Bible speaks in the language of man in order to help us understand concepts which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Thus, a metaphor like "The hand of God" may be used to represent strength and protection such as in the verse, "Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy" (**Exodus 15:6**). At the same time, the image of God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness, as in the verse, "You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor." (**Psalms 145:16**)." **Animal metaphors** are frequently used in the Bible. For example, the Almighty "is for them like the horns of the wild ox; they shall devour enemy nations . . . they crouch, they lie down like the lion" (**Numbers 24:8--9**). In the Book of Proverbs, the references to animals serve mostly to teach good behavior: "Go to the ant; thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." (**Proverbs 6:6-8**)." In the "Parable of the **Fig Tree**" briefly referred to in **Matthew 24:32**, **Mark 13:28**, **Luke 13:6, 21:29** and the **Doctrine & Covenants 35:16**, consideration should be given to the growth of fig trees in Israel. First, the spring season fruit appears, then the leaves grow as the tree becomes full, followed by a fall season second fruit. The meaning of the parable includes, the first coming, and the second coming. In modern history, first, the restoration, the growth of the Church, followed by the second coming of the Messiah.

How familiar is it for Jews to make parables about parables?

"The laws of ritual purity and impurity, the parables taken from nature and the accounts of God's providence over His creatures all involve biology." "The first

connection between birds and Judaism is found in the Bible where there are numerous descriptions, parables and allegories taken from bird life, as well as laws concerning their ritual fitness as food. To the 37 birds mentioned in the Bible, the *Talmud* (written biblical Jewish interpretations) adds many more discussing in particular, what features make a bird "unclean," and therefore not kosher." "When the Gaon of Vilna, the great rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman fell ill and was too weak to study, he asked the Dubno *maggid* (an itinerant Jewish preacher using a biblical text usually embellished by parables from rabbinical commentaries and Jewish folklore) to visit him and read him his stories, parables and biblical interpretations. Once the *maggid* was asked, "How is it that for every moral lesson you have a beautiful story to teach it with?" The *maggid* smiled. "To answer that I can tell another story. I was once walking in the woods and saw a boy shooting arrows at targets. There were targets on every tree and each one had an arrow dead center. 'How expert you are!' I said. 'How did you manage so many exactly at the bull's-eye?' 'It's easy,' the boy answered. 'First I shoot the arrow and then I draw the target around it.' I do the same," said the *maggid*."

What ways can parables be used in teaching?

"Parables (are) a story often used in the Bible or rabbinic literature to convey a message by means of comparison. The story helps to capture the attention of the listener and its familiar format provides a simple way of illustrating the point." "The *mashal* (as the parable is known in Hebrew) takes on many forms in Jewish literature. It can, for example, be an animal tale like Aesop's fables. Thus, Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah dissuaded the Jews from revolting against the Romans by telling them the parable of the

crane which extracted a thorn from the throat of a lion. When the crane asked for its reward, it was told that it had been sufficiently rewarded in not being eaten when thrust between the lion's jaws. Similarly, the Jews should feel lucky that they had not been annihilated by the Romans." "One of the most frequent motifs in Jewish parables is the "king" who usually symbolizes God. Plants, fruits and natural phenomena are also common subjects for these stories. Many parables are taken from daily life and are a rich source of social history." "The rabbis not only used the parable extensively, they also emphasized its great value in understanding the spirit of the *Torah*. Though the stories in parables are often simplistic and childish, the *Midrash* warns against ignoring them, "Let not the parable be lightly esteemed in thine eyes, since by its means one can master the whole *Torah*." "Another type of *aggadah* (a non-legalistic statement about rabbinic interpretation in the *Talmud* and *Midrash*), also often disguised in simple form, was in reality a mystical message. Since mysticism does not lend itself well to exact expression, the rabbis would use a parable or an allegory to make themselves understood." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What prompted the prophets to limit parables in the Book of Mormon?

"The principle involved which necessitates the policy of teaching by parables is found in Amulek's statement: "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him." ([Alma 12:9](#).) The difference in receptiveness to the truth of the Jews, among whom our Lord ministered in mortality, and the Nephites, to whom he went after his resurrection, is

nowhere better shown than in the fact that he gave at least 40 parables to the Jews, but he taught the Nephites, not in parables, but in plainness.” **(Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Page 553)** To end up with the plainness of the Lord’s

teachings as well as in our education, entertainment, and communication we can learn to use the mediums that enhance sight, sound, and motion. Got the picture? Sound all right to you? Get the drift?