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# “EARS TO HEAR”

Living the Parables  
of Jesus



Summer 2024 – Greenfield Community Church

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## WHAT IS A PARABLE?

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A short saying or story that makes a comparison in order to provoke a moral, social, or spiritual truth.

- Hebrew: *mashal* (משל), “saying, comparison.”
  - Greek: *parabole* (παραβολή), “to throw along side.”
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## HOW TO HEAR PARABLES

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1. Consider the various contexts.
  2. Know when to stop.
  3. Don't domesticate them!
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## HOW TO HEAR PARABLES

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“If we stop with the easy lessons, good though they may be, we lose the way Jesus' first followers would have heard these parables, and we lose the genius of Jesus' teaching... Those followers knew that parables and the tellers of parables were there to prompt them to see the world in a different way, to challenge, and at times to indict.

We might be better off thinking less about what they 'mean' and more about what they can 'do': remind, provoke, refine, confront, disturb...” (Amy Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*, 4).

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## HOW TO LIVE PARABLES

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### Attitude & Action

- A willingness to listen...      “He who has ears,
- and respond appropriately.      let him hear!”

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## THE FIELD TELLS THE STORY

The Parable of the Four Hearers (Luke 8:4-15)

Greenfield Community Church  
Pastor Tyler Williams  
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## THE FIELD TELLS THE STORY

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1. Telling the Parable (8:4-8).
2. Jesus' Explanation (8:9-15).
  - a. Statement on the Purpose of Parables (8:10).
  - b. The Meaning of the Parable (8:11-15).

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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“Jesus said, ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that “though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand”’ (Luke 8:10).

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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Jesus did not speak in parables to prevent understanding, although some are enigmatic.

- Parables enlighten and instruct, but often with a message that people do not want to hear.
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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’<sup>9</sup> He said, ‘Go and tell this people: “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”<sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed’” (Isaiah 6:8-10).

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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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1. Stating the inevitable, with a hope of repentance.
  2. This passage has become the classic description of the refusal to hear.
  3. Functions ironically as warning and challenge and invitation to repentance.
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## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

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Jesus is quoting this passage from Isaiah much to the same effect: Will what was happened with Isaiah, happen again with Jesus' message?

The **BIG QUESTION** is how people will respond to Jesus' message of the kingdom of God?

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## THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

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Typical of ancient farming techniques?

Focus is on the receptivity and conditions of the soil.

- The four types of soil = four types of hearers of the Word.
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HEARER #1

**DISMISSIVE**

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HEARER #2

**SHALLOW**

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HEARER #3

**DISTRACTED**

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HEARER #4

## DISCIPLED

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HEARER #4 **DISCIPLED**

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1. Hear – to hear and understand a message.
  2. Retain – to hold to, hold fast.
  3. Persevere – to focus on for the long run.
  4. Produce – to bear fruit, to live it out!
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### THE POINT?

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Which soil do you identify with?

The majority (3 out of 4) of cases fail to persevere!

Jesus' listeners walked away pondering whether they really heard and understood his message.

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### THE POINT?

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“People think they can look like giant oaks without putting down deep roots. When they realize how much effort it takes to put down deep roots, they too often settle for being bramble bushes” (Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 176).

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“Whoever has ears to hear,  
let them hear.”

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