

Adventure Club

A weekly lesson for children, young people, parents and grandparents, from the GCI Watford Church.
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EIGHT PARABLES

These eight parables are from Matthew chapter 13. They are about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus used many parables. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It helps us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Parables encourage listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from others.

The Parable of the Sower

'On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"'. . .

Matthew 13:1-8, *NKJV*.



The Parable of the Sower Based on the Cockney Bible

As 'e usually did, Jesus started to teach down by the coffee and tea of Galilee. Such a massive crowd gathered, that 'e had to get in a nanny goat and 'e sat down in it. The nanny was out in the fisherman's daughter and the massive crowd were standing on the shore at the fisherman's edge. He used parables to teach them lots of stuff and 'e said to 'em. Listen up! There was once this geezer who went out to sow some corn. As 'e was scattering all the seed in the field some of it fell along the frog and toad, and all the little Richards came and ate the seed up. Some of the seed fell on rocky safe and sound and there

was hardly any soil there. The little seed sprouted really quickly because the soil was not very deep. Then, the peas in the pod ol' bath bun came up, and burnt the young plants and 'cos the roots hadn't grown very deep, the little plants all dried up. Some of the seed fell into some thorn bushes, which grew up and choked the plants and they didn't produce any corn. But folks, some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants sprouted. They grew, and produced loads of corn; some had thirty grains, some sixty and, would you Adam and Eve it, some had a hundred!



Matthew 13:1-8.

Between the telling of this parable by Jesus and His given its explanation, Jesus explains that parables were given to hide meaning to some, just as Cockney slang can hid meaning.

Here is what the Cockney slang means:

coffee and tea = sea. nanny goat = boat. fisherman's daughter = water. geezer = person. frog and toad = road. Richards = Richard the Third = birds. safe and sound = ground. peas in the pod = hot. bath bun = sun. Adam and Eve it = believe it. 'e = he. 'em = them. 'cos = because. 'ol = old.

As well as the Cockney slang hiding meaning, there are other words and phrases in this parable that also hide meaning. For example, what does 'seed' signify? What does the seed planted on 'rocky ground' or in amongst 'thorn bushes' mean? What does the 'seed in good ground' symbolise? Jesus Himself gives the explanation in verses 18-23.

Cockneys are associated with Pearly Kings & Queens (above left) and Bow Bells (St Mary-le-Bow, London, above right).

The Parable of the Sower

A Drama based on *Old MacDonald had a Farm*



Narrator: One day, old MacDonald went out to sow some wheat seeds (Actor plays old MacDonald, makes a farmer noise, *Oo-arr*, and pretends to plant some seeds.) (Actors then sing to the tune of *Old MacDonald had a Farm*): 'Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o. And on that farm, he scattered some seeds, e-i-e-i-o. With a scatter-scat here and a scatter-scat there. Here a scatter, there a scatter, everywhere a scatter-scat. Old MacDonald had a farm e-i-e-i-o.' (Actors freeze.)

Narrator: As the seeds were being sown by old MacDonald (Acting and *Oo-arr*) some seed fell onto a path. (Actors pretend to be birds and sing:) 'Now some of those seeds landed on the path e-i-e-i-o, so the birds came along and pecked them all up, e-i-e-i-o. With a peck-peck here and a peck-peck there, here a peck, there a peck, everywhere a peck-peck. Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o.' (Actors freeze.)

Narrator: Some other seeds landed on rocky, stony soil. (Actor pretends to plant more seeds and says *Oo-arr*.) (Actors pretend to wither and sing:) 'Now some of that seed fell on rocky soil, e-i-e-i-o. It grew a little bit, then the sun withered it, e-i-e-i-o. With a wither-wither here, and a wither-wither there, here a wither, there a wither, everywhere a wither-wither. Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o.' (Actors freeze.)

Narrator: As old MacDonald (Acting and *Oo-arr*) scattered more seeds, some of them landed amongst weeds and thorns.

(Actors pretend to be choking and sing:) 'Some more of those seeds got caught in thorns and weeds, e-i-e-i-o. And the seeds got killed by the strangling weeds, e-i-e-i-o, With a eeurrrch (strangling noise) here, and a eeurrrch there, Here a eeurrrch, there a eeurrrch, everywhere a eeurrrch-eeurrrch. Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o.' (Actors freeze.)

Narrator: But a lot of seeds fell on good, healthy soil and much to old MacDonald's delight (Action and *Oo-aar*) they grew into wheat.

Actors: (pretending to zoom up and sing:) 'Now the rest of those seeds fell on healthy soil, e-i-e-i-o. They zoomed up quick to old MacDonald's joy, e-i-e-i-o. With a zoom-zoom here, and a zoom-zoom there, here a zoom, there a zoom, everywhere a zoom-zoom. Old MacDonald had a farm, e-i-e-i-o.' (Actors freeze.)

Narrator: The crowd enjoyed the story, but did not understand it. (Actors look puzzled.) So here's the explanation. The seeds (Old MacDonald does a quick scatter-scat) represent God's message and the four types of soil represents the hearts of people who hear it. Some people are like the path and the message is quickly snatched away. (Actors do a quick peck-peck.) With some others, on stony ground, as soon as trouble comes along their interest withers away. (Actors do a quick wither-wither.). Others, amongst the weeds, hear the Gospel, but money and the things of the world choke the message. (Actors do a quick eeurrrch-eeurrrch.) However, the healthy soil represents those who listen to the message and accept it and change accordingly. (Actors do a quick zoom-zoom.)

Finish with a loud, rousing final chorus, at speed, with lots of acting and a concluding e-i-e-i-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!

The Explanation of the Parable of the Sower

'Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty'

Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

'Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir,

did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ . . .

‘And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” ’
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.



The Bearded Darnel
It's possible that these
are the tares
in Matthew 13.

Some notes:

Many people think that the ‘tares’ Jesus spoke are weeds called Darnel, probably the Bearded Darnel, or in Latin: *Lolium temulentum*. It looks very much like wheat until it's mature, then its poisonous seeds turn black. Another possibility is the weed *Cephalaria syriaca* (Latin name), but based on archaeological studies, its evident lack in Biblical times would seem to indicate it's possibly not the ‘tare’ of the Bible.

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The Parable of the Mustard Seed



‘Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches” ’
Matthew 13:31-32.

Some notes:

A ‘herb’ that grows large enough for birds to nest in is certainly big.

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The Parable of the Leaven



‘Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” ’
Matthew 13:33.

Some notes:

Jesus mentions three kinds of leaven: the leaven of the Pharisees (Luke 12:1), the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:11-12) and the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15).

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The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field’
Matthew 13:44.

Some notes:

The Kingdom of Heaven is such that those who have found it are willing to give up all to possess it. The picture is by Rembrandt. He painted it in about 1630.





The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it’
Matthew 13:45-46.

Some notes:

Giant clams can produce pearls weighing several kilograms, but they are usually not round.

A lesson from the Oyster: The irritations get into his shell, He does not like them, but he can’t get rid of them, so he settles down to make of them one of the most beautiful things in the world; he makes each irritation into a lovely pearl. There are irritations in our lives too, perhaps we can turn them into figurative pearls like patience, empathy, love etc.



An 1870 painting of a Pearl Trader.

The Parable of the Dragnet



‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth’
Matthew 13:47-50.

Some notes:

The dragnet is also called the Seine (Greek *Sagene*). It is cast into the sea then dragged to the shore, in the process all kinds of fish are caught which the fisherman on the shore then sort out. The scale-less catfish is one of the fish the fisherman would not want to keep and so would be thrown away.

The Parable of the Scribe

‘Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old” ’
Matthew 13:52.

Some notes:

The *Contemporary English Version* translates the verse this way: ‘Every student of the Scriptures who becomes a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like someone who brings out new and old treasures from the storeroom.’

The Correspondence Between these Eight Parables

The eight parables in Matthew 13 remarkably all have correspondence with each other. Here are some examples: The first four parables are spoken *outside the house* to the multitudes (v 1) and the last four parables are spoken *inside the house* with the disciples (v 36). The 2nd, 3rd and 4th parables all begin with ‘Another’, the 5th, 6th and 7th parables all begin with ‘Again’. The 2nd and 7th parables (Tares and Dragnet) *both* talk about the *good and bad together*. The 3rd and 6th parables highlight *one* Mustard tree and *one* Pearl. The 4th and 5th parables *both* talk about Leaven and Treasure being *hid*. In the 1st and 4th parables there are *three* kinds of bad ground and *three* measures of meal. The 5th and 8th parables *both* talk about *Treasure*. The 2nd and 3rd parables talk about Tares and Mustard seed which are *in the earth* and the 6th and 7th parables talk about Pearls and Fish which are *in the sea*.

See if you can memorize some, or all, of these words:

‘I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world.’

Matthew 13:35, *New Living Translation* (Psalm 78:2).

Why Did Jesus Use 'Hard-to-Understand Parables'?

'Then his disciples approached Jesus and asked, "Why do you always speak to people in these hard-to-understand parables?" He explained, "You've been given the intimate experience of insight into the hidden truths and mysteries of the realm of heaven's kingdom, but they have not. For everyone who listens with an open heart will receive progressively more revelation until he has more than enough. But those who don't listen with an open, teachable heart, even the understanding that they think they have will be taken from them. That's why I teach the people using parables, because they think they're looking for truth, yet because their hearts are unteachable, they never discover it. Although they will listen to me, they never fully perceive the message I speak. The prophecy of Isaiah describes them perfectly:

'Although they listen carefully to everything I speak, they don't understand a thing I say. They look and pretend to see, but the eyes of their hearts are closed. Their minds are dull and slow to perceive, their ears are plugged and are hard of hearing, and they have deliberately shut their eyes to the truth. Otherwise they would open their eyes to see, and open their ears to hear, and open their minds to understand. Then they would turn to me and let me instantly heal them' " '

Matthew 13:10-15, *The Passion Translation* (Isaiah 6:9).

Parables Can Explain Things Hidden Since the Creation of the World

'Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables. This fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet: "I will speak to you in parables. I will explain things hidden since the creation of the world." ' Matthew 13:34-35, *New Living Translation* (Psalm 78:2).

Word Search

PARABLE	TREASURE
SOWER	PEARL
COCKNEY	SCRIBE
SEED	KINGDOM
MERCHANT	OF
WHEAT	HEAVEN
TARES	LOLIUM
MUSTARD	TEMULENTUM
HERB	THIRTY
LEAVEN	SIXTY
HIDDEN	HUNDREDFOLD
PATH	FIELD
EIEIO	STONES
DRAGNET	WEEDS

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NKJV used throughout except where noted.

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