

# Why speakest thou in parables

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Preacher: Prof Donald Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Matthew chapter 13 and verse 10, the disciples came and said to him, why speakest thou unto them in parables? The word parable means literally simply throwing together.

And that shows us in a general way what a parable is. It is a throwing together of two different things in order by the one to illustrate the other.

More narrowly, it is a throwing together of a truth or fact or event from the word of nature.

A throwing of that over against a truth or a principle from the word of the Spirit in order to illustrate that spiritual principle.

And we find that in this chapter of Matthew's gospel, we have a gathering together of a whole series of these parables from the teaching of our Lord.

[ 1 : 14 ] The entire chapter is given over to these parables. And the parables are all of them concerned to illustrate some aspect of the kingdom of God.

And what we have thrown together is some narrative or some fact from the ordinary everyday world on the one hand, and a principle of the kingdom of God on the other hand.

And these ordinary events and facts are designed to cast light for the disciples upon those great spiritual truths.

Now, according to Matthew's arrangement of his gospel, the parabolic teaching of the Savior began at this precise point.

It began after the Sermon on the Mount, and it began after the great thanksgiving, in which Christ speaks of things being hidden from the wise and prudent, and being revealed unto babes.

[ 2 : 27 ] And it began also after our Lord's open breach with the Pharisees, which we saw a fortnight ago. And it is also Matthew's intention to place this particular parable that we call often the parable of a sower, to place that parable at the head of the list.

And he does so because, in Matthew's understanding, it is crucial to an understanding of all the other parables. It is a parable about hearing the gospel.

And it's a parable into which the Lord has built his own explanation of his reason for using this kind of teaching.

Now, I want tonight to ask two or three questions with regard to this whole passage that deals with this particular parable.

And I want to ask, first of all, why did the Lord Jesus Christ teach in parables? You will see that the disciples themselves thought that that question was worth asking.

[ 3 : 44 ] And I suppose that if I were to ask most of you tonight why Christ taught in this way, I would receive a very predictable answer.

I would be told, even by the children, that Christ taught in this way in order to simplify his teaching. Because we have been taught to assume that the parables were simple and graphic and self-evident illustrations of great spiritual realities.

And you would say to me that Christ used them in order to arrest attention, in order to make his preaching interesting.

And you would say to me that all preachers ought to use similar illustrations for the same reasons. And you would all assume that because of these parables, the Lord's teaching was so much easier to understand.

[ 4 : 49 ] Easy, that is, for those who weren't very, very interested in the things of the gospel. There is a measure of truth in that understanding.

It is certainly true that with regard to the believers themselves, the parables were helpful illustrations. But it is very, very far from being the truth as Christ understood it, that he used those parables in order to make his preaching to the unconverted and the uncommitted more simple and

more interesting and more arresting.

Let's look for a moment at some of the problems which face that particular view of the parables. You see, for example, that according to this narrative, the parables were not easy to understand at all.

Well, you say, yes, but they are. This is a perfectly simple parable. But just to mention for the moment, if the interpretation which Christ gives of the parable, if that interpretation were removed, would it then be easy to understand?

And you remember the multitude, the Lord's congregation, they did not hear the interpretation at all. They only heard the parable.

[ 6 : 29 ] And they did not hear the Lord's explanation of the parable. And it is quite evident that the disciples themselves did not understand this parable.

They had to ask what the parable meant. And they had to be taught by the Lord in the simplest manner, step by step, exactly what he meant by this particular parable which he had spoken.

So, it is clear from this narrative itself, that the meaning of those parables was by no means self-evident. And that whatever they were, they were not simple and arresting illustrations.

They were very often very complex, very mysterious, and even to the disciples, utterly bewildering.

Now, we have the same thing at many other points in the scriptures.

You remember, for example, Nathan's famous parable. When he comes and tells David the very sad and moving story of a rich man to whom a traveler came.

[ 7 : 51 ] And that rich man, rather than kill one of his own many lambs, went and took the lamb, the only lamb of a poor neighbor, and slew that lamb instead.

And you remember that David went all the way with the story. He was gripped by it, and its principles secured his consent instinctively and immediately.

And he said, Where is this man? Because the full wrath of the law of the land must fall upon this man. And only then gets Nathan moving with the punchline and say to him, Thou art the man.

And it's only when it is interpreted that David understands the very pointed reference to himself.

You have the same thing in John's gospel.

Where the disciples say to Christ at one point, Now speakest thou plainly, and not in parables. So that there is, in understanding that view of the matter, there is a very, very clear distinction made between speaking plainly and speaking in parables.

[ 9 : 14 ] Now you see, what is emerging from this brief discussion of the problem is this, that these parables were not at all simple.

They were not at all self-evident in their meaning. And they were not at all easily understood. And in fact were not understood by the multitude. And were often not understood even by the disciples themselves.

But then you see, we come to something else. And it is one of the most astounding things in the New Testament. And one of the most difficult things to preach. And that is this. That not only was it the result of the Lord's teaching that he was not understood.

But it was the reason why Christ chose this method. He chose the method so that they would not understand.

Lest, he says, they should see. And lest they should hear. And lest they should understand with an heart. And lest they should be converted.

[ 10 : 24 ] And I should heal them. And the truth is emerging. That in fact, Christ taught in parables to avail and to obscure the truth.

There were certain people. And they didn't understand that was the result. But it was also the Lord's intention.

He deliberately used this method so that the multitude should not understand. Now, as I say, that is utterly astounding to us.

And it is so offensive. And yet, I've got to learn to reckon with it. And I've got to ask myself, Is there any possible reason why the Lord should have dealt with those people in this way?

Well, remember again, The position of this parable in the order of Matthew's gospel. Christ has already been teaching the people in the plainest possible manner.

[ 11 : 38 ] He has taught them in the great sermon we saw on the mount. He has taught them there plainly. He has taught them there with no parables, With no obscurities at all.

And what has happened? They were amazed by the teaching. And they admired the teaching. But they did not obey the teaching.

And that's why in the 11th chapter, We have the great utterance, I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, That thou hast hid these things From the wise and prudent.

In other words, These people were outside the kingdom, And they had rejected the gospel. They had rejected the plain teaching.

They had rejected also, The message of the Lord's mighty acts and mighty works. And it is only then, That Christ moves on to teach in parables.

[12:47] And it is, A quite deliberate, Veiling and obscuring, Of his own message. It is, Almost to the multitude, A speaking in riddles.

Now there are several other phenomena, In the New Testament gospels, Of the same kind. You remember when Christ heals, He tells them time and again, Don't go and tell.

You remember when the devils, Begin to bear their witness to Christ, And say that he is the son of God, He silences those devils. You remember again that Christ, Known who in the gospels, Calls himself the Messiah.

Because he is concerned, To obscure that mystery, From those, Who are outside the kingdom, And who would, Misunderstand the message.

Well I don't want tonight to, Move into, All the profundities and perplexities, Of result, From that great emphasis. But it is at least saying this to us, That, This whole phenomenon, Of unbelief, And of rejection, Of Christ and his gospel, Lies within the purpose, And the full, Ordination of God.

[14:18] The failure of these men and women, To understand the gospel, That is a great and solemn fact, It was the result, Of a process, That Christ calls, A hiding of the truth, From those, Who were wise and prudent, And furthermore, In the view, Of our unbelief, And in punishment, And retribution, For their unbelief, We have the operation, Of this other principle, Whosoever hath not, From him shall be taken away, Even that he hath.

They had refused, The plain teaching, And now the Lord, Begins to teach them, In a way that is parabolic, In a way that is mysterious, Why?

Lest, They should see, Lest, They should hear, Lest, They should be converted, And I am not saying, That it is a common situation, But I am saying, That there are moments, In human history, And there are moments, In the lives of men and women, When this, Is the way that God, Deals with them, When, After years of, Expostulation, And information, Of exhortation, And pleading, The Lord, Begins to move in, With a different approach, Entirely, And the principle, Becomes operative, Lest, They should be converted, We have it, In a solemn process, Of Romans chapter 1, Where God gives her people, Over to a reprobate mind, And we have it, In a solemn,

Understanding of his own, Mission and ministry, That we have, From the lips of Christ, In this, Awesome, In this tremendously, Solemn passage, That it is the Lord's, Concern with some men and women, Who have rejected his gospel, It is as concern, Them to deal with them, Lest they should be converted, And, It is surely, A sin, And only a possibility, For those, Who have been immensely privileged, Woe unto thee, Horadson, Woe unto thee, Bethsaida, You have seen the mighty acts, And you have heard, A clear teaching, You have seen, The tremendous miracles, You have heard, That marvelous sermon, On the mount, And you rejected it, And now the Lord, Deals in this different way, In terms of these,

Different principles, Lest they should see, Lest they should hear, Lest they should be, Converted, And perhaps we need to, Revise entirely, Our whole, School book, Understanding of parables, But that's by the way, It was the very concern, Of those parables, To hide the truth, From those who were outside, They had rejected the Christ, They had rejected the Messiah, And there was no way, That if they rejected him, They might be able, To understand the kingdom, Because he was the kingdom, And they had put themselves, Outside the kingdom, And so long as they stood, Outside the kingdom, So long as they rejected, The Lord, The Christ, The Savior, So long, The effect, Of the truth itself,

[18:18] Would be to blind them, The truth itself, Would harden them, The truth itself, Would drive them, Further and further, From God, Because they came, Under the operation, Of this, Lest they should be converted, And lest, I should heal them, And let me then, Ask a second question, What is the explanation, For the widespread rejection, Of the word of God, Why is it that so many refuse, And repudiate, And dissolve the truth, And that was, A great problem for the Savior, A great problem for his own, Human understanding, And it is, A great problem, Surely for ourselves too,

Why is it, That so few, Believe our report, Why is it,

That for all the preaching, In this city tonight, There is so little fruit, And we can find perhaps, So many reasons, And we can especially look at, All the poor preachers, Not all poor preachers, And we can say to ourselves, It's a matter, Of uninteresting preaching, It's a matter of, Defective methods, Of communication, It's a matter of, Inadequate preparation, It's a matter of, The absence of illustrations, It's the, A matter of the, Failure to use, Modern means, And modern techniques, To get abreast of our people, And all that may be true, But there is a great lesson, That shines forth tonight, From this parable, And it's this, That the response, Is a matter of one great thing, One thing above all, And it is a matter, Of this one thing, It is a matter, Of the kind of soil, Into which the seed falls, It depends, Not on the brilliance, Of the communicator, Not on his eloquence, Not on his earnestness, Not on his ability, It depends upon the soil, And this parable, Is not about a soil, It's not about a seed, It's about a soil, It's about different kinds, Of soil, And it is saying to us, The word of the kingdom, Of God is like that, It depends upon the soil, Into which it falls, Because it's Christ, You have the same soil, You have the same seed,

But you have four, Different kinds of result, And the result, In each single instance, Is determined directly, By the soil, If it falls into a certain soil, Then the result is predictable, If it falls into another kind of soil, Then the result is equally predictable, It depends, Is Christ, On the soil, Let's forget the parable for the moment, What does the response, And the result, And the fruit, Depend?

It depends, Is Christ, On the kind of human heart, Into which it falls, And it depends, Entirely on that, There is no response, In all those many instances, To which the Lord refers, And there is no response, Not because the preacher was deficient, Because this particular one wasn't, Not because his message, Had any shortcomings whatsoever, Because his message, Had no shortcomings at all, And yet, There was no response, And there was no response, Because, Of the condition, Of the hearts, Into which the seed was fallen, In other words, If we want a response, What is the great prerequisite, Of a positive response, Of a spiritual response,

[ 23 : 09 ] To the preaching of the word, What is the great prerequisite, It is, Is Christ, A good soil, And in the absence of that, There is going to be, No response, And doesn't that mean so much to us, As witnesses to God in Christ, Is it not something, Is it not something, We ought to lay, So deeply, And so totally to heart, That it all depends, Upon the soil, And what so great need, As those who bear witness to God, It is surely, To stand tonight, Before the sovereignty of God, And to plead with them in prayer, That he would change the soil, That he would give men new hearts, That he would open hearts,

Which are blinded by prejudice, And by antagonists, And by ignorance, By misunderstanding, By worldliness, By selfishness, By Pharisees, There are so many impediments, Even before me tonight, So many impediments, To the reception of my message, And I know, All the deficiencies of its delivery, It has in itself, I trust before God, No deficiencies at all, But it is full of deficiencies in the delivery, But is that the real problem, Or is it not, The blindness, The obstinacy, The hardness, The wordiness, The pharisaism, The hypocrisy, Of her own, Human heart, And is there any single answer, At all to the problem, But that God would come, In the riches, And in the might, Of his own, Invincible grace, And that he would create,

In men and women, A new heart, We have to ask ourselves, What is the reason, What is the reason, For the failure, Of the preaching of the gospel, And the great answer, It's the song, What is the answer, God must give new hearts, God must prepare the song, God must make it, Responsive and fruitful, Otherwise, It's going to be of no way, And I think I must go beyond, Because the most perplexing, Of all the questions surely, Is, Why then, Is God not opening hearts, Why in this city, Why in this congregation, Are there so few hearts, Which God is opening to the gospel,

And we might say to ourselves again, Is it possible that we stand, Within the application, Of this terrible and solemn principle, That will lie, Under the, Abandonment, Of God, Those Jews, Who had defied God, In the face of so much privilege, And over whom this world stands, Lest they be converted, Is it possible, That such guilt attaches, To hear us of the gospel, In our situation, That that is the word, That God has uttered over them, Lest they be converted, Are, Is it possible, That it is we as witnesses, And I as preacher, Who stand under the judgment of God, And of us he has said, That he will not use us, That he will not own us, That he will not acknowledge us, That he will not bless us, Because what's operating, Is not a principle of naked sovereignty, But a principle of retribution, Lest they be converted, The retribution, Of their willful, And obstinate blindness, Our retribution, Upon a generation, Of unworthy preachers, And the Lord, Will not condescend, To

acknowledge,

[ 28 : 19 ] So we've asked, Why does he speak in parables, We've asked, Why is the response so poor, And we must ask a third question, And that is this, What kind of heart, Do we have, You and I, The young and the old, And the boys and girls, What kind of hearts, As you hear this word tonight, Enter, What kind of silence, Is it falling, In your case, And what kind of response, Is it meeting with, And the Lord gives us, Certain criteria, By which we can understand, For ourselves, What kinds of hearts we have, And it draws your attention, To three kinds of hearers, There is first of all,

The inattentive hearer, This man pays, No attention whatsoever, There is a seed that, Falls by the wayside, Doesn't fall, On the field at all, It falls outside the field, It falls on the pavement, And immediately, The Lord says, The birds of the air come, Or the wicked one comes, Or Satan comes, And takes away the seed, These people are paying, No attention, These people aren't listening, These people, Aren't understanding, These people aren't taking, Anything with them, And it's an amazing thing, That, And it's a great thing too, That still they're in the house of God, They're near the preaching, And yet, They are utterly, And totally inattentive, They're saying, Perhaps you're saying it to me, I dare you to make me listen,

And you will no doubt, Go away and say that, The whole thing is so utterly boring, And yet, I don't believe, That even humility, Requires, That I believe that, It may be that I preach this gospel, Very uninterestingly, But I don't preach, An uninteresting gospel, And the real problem with you, Whatever you may think and say, Has nothing to do with the way I communicate, Or the way the church in general communicates, But the problem Christ says, Is your heart, And what you need is, Not just a little touch up, And reformation, An amendment of character, Here and there, No, You need to be taken apart, By God,

And made a new creation, You need the word of his power, To go right down, Into the depths of your soul, And to destroy what you are, To make that old man, That you are, Cease to be, To put him right out of existence, And to give you, And to give you, A new heart, And a new spirit, And a new mind, Because, The only problem, With this man, Who wouldn't listen, This man, And the birds, Came and took away, God's word, It was, The problem, The problem with that man, Wasn't the preacher, The problem with that man, Wasn't the message, The problem with that man, Wasn't the uncomfortable views, The problem with that man, Was his own heart, It was closed, Closed like Lydia's heart, Closed, To the word of God, And it was closed, So thoroughly, That only the omnipotence, Of God, Could open it, And I tell you, You've got a problem, Because, Nothing can open it, But the power of God, And if you want to know, Tonight, What to do, I tell you, What to do, That we get down, On our knees, Before God, And say, Create a clean heart, Lord, And renew, The right spirit, Within me, That is the, Only answer, And then you see, The Lord, Shows us a second kind of person, And that is, The temporary disciple, Or the temporary believer, There are those people, Says Christ, And they're like the seed, That falls on stony ground, And it seems to produce, The most remarkable results, It springs up immediately, There are almost, Instantaneously visible results,

[ 33 : 32 ] And these people, Are full of joy, And everybody in the church, Is delighted, Because they're such bright, And shining Christians, And they look so promising, And they look so, Full of the, Glory of the gospel, That many of the, Mature Christians, Feel themselves, Put to shame, As they look at the quality, Of these, Youngsters, In the Christian faith, Because, They understand, So much, And because, They're so full, Of the joy, Of the Lord, And the results, Are so spectacular, But, We see then, What Christ says, There comes, The tribulation, And the persecution, And they're offended, They're upset, They're disturbed,

And their faith, Is shaken, See, The problem was, They had looked, At this gospel, Partially, And they had seen, The blessings, And the glory, Of the promises, And they had enjoyed, The conviviality, And the society, Of their Christian friends, But then, They discovered, There was another side, They made, They made the discovery, That the Christians, Of that day, Suffered tribulation, They made the discovery, That they were persecuted, And at once, Their faith, Was shaken, Neither may tonight, Even before me, Be some, Who have gone, Through that experience, And you know,

That once, You received this word, And received it with joy, But then, Your faith was shaken, By tribulation, By persecution, By the narrowness, And by the stringency, And the demandiness, Of the Christian way, I would say to you, Just one thing, Don't despair, It seems to me, That the public, Backslider, The apostate, That in many ways, He is the saddest, Man or woman, On God's earth,

And just because, It is possible, That there is somebody, Tonight, In that condition, May I say to you, That from where you stand, As a backslider, As a public, Apostate, That even from there, There is a road, Back to God, If you take it, But I would say to you, Let all of us tonight, Who are in our spiritual youth,

In our Christian youth, Let's be sure, That we have the whole picture, Let's be sure, That you're not being, Born along, On a wave, Of illusory, And deceptive, Optimism, And blind, To what are the harsh, Realities, That stand alongside, Of the blessings, On the Christian way, I don't want to say, That it's all tribulation, I don't want to say, That it's all persecution, But I want to say, That it's tribulation, And I want to say, That it's persecution, And I want to say, That it's pressure, And I want to say, There is narrowness, And you remember that, From the very, very outset, And it might very well mean, That you set out, With very much less joy, Than those others, But it's the stability, And the durability, Those are the things,

That matter, And then there is another kind, Of temporary believer too, That person says, Christ and it's like, The seed that fell among the thorns, And that seed grows up too, It makes some progress, But then he says, What happens, The cares of this world, The deceitfulness of riches, And the desire, Or the lust, Of other things entering in, Some of these promising disciples, Are destroyed, By the narrowness, Of the Christian way, Others, Are destroyed by worldliness, The very, very poor, Anxiousness to where tomorrow's bread, Will come to, Don't you think for a moment, That when you're poor, It's easy to be a Christian, Now says Christ, The cares of this world,

[ 38 : 39 ] They have destroyed, Many a pauper, Who became a disciple, Wondering where tomorrow's bread, Was coming from, And then, Equally, The deceitfulness of riches, That man, Who had no worries, Financially, As we could see it, But, Who lost his soul, Worrying, Over the stock exchange, And his profit marches, For that other man, Says Christ, And is destroyed, By, The desire, Or the lust, For other things, He wants, He wants, He wants, What does he want, He wants, He wants earthly treasure, We've seen, Some of what that means, What does it do to him, That professing Christian, He wants earthly treasure, What does it do to him, It destroys him, It chokes his faith, And I would say to you,

Say to me, Say to all of us, What terrible dangers, These are, That, The cares of this world, When you, Get older, When you face responsibilities, When you get married, When you are families, As you get promotion, As you move up the ladder, What's it going to do, To your faith, That, Let's not trivialize, Let, Those that, Think they stand, Take heed, Lest they fall, And then Christ says, There's a third kind, Of disciple, Third kind of healer, There are the inattentive ones, There are the temporary believers, And there are the real disciples, What's, The thing about, Those real disciples, The thing about them, Says Christ simply is this, They bear fruit, I would say, That means two things, They do, The word of God,

They go and build, On the foundation, And they bear fruit, Unto holiness, What kind of heart, Have I got, Is it a doing heart, Is it an obeying heart, Is it a holy heart, That's the only, Thing that can secure, Our entry, Into the kingdom of God, It's not, What a man knows, It's not, What a man feels, But does he bear, The fruit, Of an obedient life, Does he bear, The fruit, That is holiness, I would say again, To you, To all of you, And even to the boys, And girls, What kind of soil, Are you, What kind of heart,

Are you and I, What kind of heart, Are you and I,