

Ears to Hear

Getting to the Point of the Parables

3. Neighbourhood Watch

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10v 25-37

“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.”

– Matthew 13v 34

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

It is estimated that in the synoptic Gospels, (Matthew, Mark and Luke) around one third of Jesus' words are found in His parables. If then, we are really interested in understanding Jesus; how He thought and taught, then we would do well to look at these penetrative illustrations more closely.

Yet it is sad to so often hear parables talked about in such a bland and predictable way. Western Christians have not only sought to instantly spiritualise the parables, but to sanitise them also. This is both tragic and ironic. The parables carry force, humour and an uncomfortably subversive message within their short, but devastating storylines.

In order for us not only to understand the parables, but also to hear the heart of Christ's teaching, we must return to Biblical times; unravel our well-worn, but often misinformed opinions and take our place not only within the culture but also the crowds of Jesus' day. Only then can we hope to hear His valiant voice and feel the force of the parables. The aim of this series is just that.

Scripture's message is a timeless one, yet its voice is all but lost if we simply jump to our own cultural conclusions and force the parables fit our own situation. Only a rigorous, prayerful approach can yield the rich rewards contained within the parables: We must ask what was going on in Israel at the time of Christ, socially, spiritually and economically? The answers to these and other questions help us to contextualise the rather lurid backdrops that Jesus paints as He makes His parabolic points. Why Jesus spoke in such memorable ways is intriguing and of great importance to us all. There are lessons to learn and lives to be touched for the cause of Christ and the parables point the way He would have us go.

This series finds its title from the words of Christ Himself: If we truly have "ears to hear," we will approach these studies with humility, diligence and an expectancy that the parables of Jesus might leap of the sacred page and into our hearts that we not simply get the point, but rather that we might also go on to live in the light of the lessons they so vividly teach us.

Do you have ears to hear? Then get into the point of the parables!

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear..." - Luke 8v 8

Neighbourhood Watch: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

The Good Samaritan is one of Jesus' best known parables. During the two thousand years of church history, it has been applied practically countless times with its clear call to strong social ethics within a life that seeks to do good to "neighbors" in need, whoever they may be. Likewise the parable has often been spiritualized in an attempt to pinpoint the "heavenly meaning" of this famous earthly story. The overriding emphasis of this approach has been to herald Christ's coming to the point of human need and, in compassion, saving those who cannot save themselves. Both types of teaching are laudable and, in some senses, undeniable as earnest Christians open their ears to hear and respond the story.

But to simply sell the story as a call to be neighborly betrays an inadequate understanding. So too the tendency to jump straight to the spiritual alternative: This can (and often has) result in dangerous misreading of the details. No. When readers attempt to make the parable simply fit their interpretation, a rather lop-sided story takes shape. In an attempt to rush straight to the moral of the tale, we can overlook the dialogue either side that provoked the parable in the first place. In order to fully appreciate the force of Jesus' lesson in Luke 10, we need to read around the parable and ask, what prompted Him to tell this story?

Jesus is quizzed by a lawyer, intent on catching Him out and enhancing his own reputation as one who understood and upheld the law. Engaging Jesus in two rounds of questions, he raises two key issues that still intrigue people today: When it comes to opinions about getting to heaven, people are concerned with "doing" and "justifying". The parable of the Good Samaritan is the meat in this interrogative sandwich and provides a surprising filling as Jesus answers the lawyer in devastating fashion.

Each week – Getting to the Point of the Parables:

A simple way of studying parables could include these 3 questions:

Look at the Picture in the Parable: What is Jesus describing?

Listen to the Punch line of the Parable: What is Jesus saying?

Learn from the Purpose of the Parable: What is Jesus expecting?

Read: Luke 10v 25-37

Key words: *Eternal Life, Law, Neighbour, Love, Priest, Levite, Samaritan*

- **A Teacher and a Test: *The Lawyer and his Question – 10v 25***

The lawyer seeks Jesus' response to the question of how eternal life is gained in an attempt to expose Christ and justify himself.

- **A Tale and a Twist: *The Samaritan and his Compassion -10v30***

Jesus engages the lawyer with a follow up question resulting in the lawyer's response: "Who is my neighbour?" A surprising answer is found in the parable that follows.

A Truth and a Task: *The Neighbour and his Need – 10v 25*

The parable results in one last question, this time from Christ: a challenge to all with ears to hear to heed the point of the parable.

Ears to Hear?

- **Questioning the Christ:**

Is there anything wrong with the lawyer testing Jesus?

When did someone last ask you a question about your faith?

What sort of questions are people asking Christians in 2014? Make a list and attempt to answer them clearly, succinctly and biblically.

- **The Point of the Parable:**

How would you summarise the main point of the parable?

What are the dangers of spiritualising every detail of Jesus' story?

If you were retelling the story, attempting to regain its original shock value, who would you compare the Priest, Levite and Samaritan to?

- **The Need of the Neighbourhood:**

Who is your neighbour? Should we wait for cries of help, or should the church be seeking to address the needs of people proactively?

What is mercy? How should the church express it in our culture?

"A Samaritan" was the shock of the story. How "shocking" are you?