



Parables of Jesus

NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PARABOLIC TEACHING. MARCAN PARABLES. SOME MATTHEAN ADDITIONS; LUCAN PARABLES.

Mark 4 (parallels Matthew 13; Luke 8:4-18); Luke 10:25-42; 11:1-13; 13:1-21, 15:1-32; 18:1-8.

“Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qqk8tyPq14Q>

“We Are Sowing” (hymn no. 216)

1. We are sowing, daily sowing
Countless seeds of good and ill,
Scattered on the level lowland,
Cast upon the windy hill;
Seeds that sink in rich, brown furrows,
Soft with heaven's gracious rain;
Seeds that rest upon the surface
Of the dry, unyielding plain;

2. Seeds that fall amid the stillness
Of the lonely mountain glen;
Seeds cast out in crowded places,
Trodden under foot of men;
Seeds by idle hearts forgotten,
Flung at random on the air;
Seeds by faithful souls remembered,
Sown in tears and love and prayer;

3. Seeds that lie unchanged, unquickened,
Lifeless on the teeming mold;
Seeds that live and grow and flourish
When the sower's hand is cold.
By a whisper sow we blessings;
By a breath we scatter strife.
In our words and thoughts and actions
Lie the seeds of death and life.

4. Thou who knowest all our weakness,
Leave us not to sow alone!
Bid thine angels guard the furrows
Where the precious grain is sown,
Till the fields are crown'd with glory,
Filled with mellow, ripened ears,
Filled with fruit of life eternal
From the seed we sowed in tears.

Parabolic Teaching



USING SHORT, COMPARATIVE STORIES KNOWN AS PARABLES, JESUS TAUGHT TRUTHS OF THE KINGDOM THAT ONLY SOME COULD UNDERSTAND

Parables

- **Clearly a feature of the teaching of the historical Jesus**, they are used, or related, with slightly differing emphases in the various gospels
- **Parables, definition**
 - *Parabolē* < *paraballō*, “to put side-by-side, to compare”
 - *Short comparative stories that teach on a number of levels, often veiling meaning*
 - Usually drawn from nature and everyday life
- **Often purposefully provocative**
 - *Challenge accepted values*
 - “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable . . .”
 - Sometimes “otherworldly” (esp. Lucan parables)
- *Be careful about turning them into allegories, trying to find one-to-one correspondences for each detail*
 - **Instead focus on the main message of the parable**, not worrying about historical or other details that may seem off

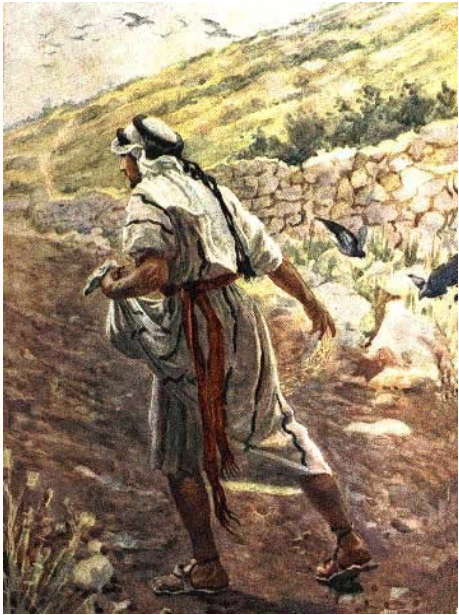
Marcan Parables



Marcan Parables

- Marcan sources?
- *Short stories linked by narrative transitions and teaching sayings explaining them*
 - **Intended to illustrate the life situation of the early Christian community, a small seed in a hostile world, etc.**
- Many more in Matthew and especially Luke
 - Contrast with some of Luke's extended parabolic stories (e.g., The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal Son)
- Unclear whether Jesus delivered the extended collection of parables in Mark 4:1–34 at one time, whether Mark was following a written collection, or whether Mark brought them together himself

Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:3–20)



- Seed by the wayside
- Stony ground
- Among thorns
- **On good ground**
- Purpose of Parables and Interpretation (4:10–20)
 - “And he said unto them, *Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God*: but **unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables**: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” (= Isaiah 6:9; 2 Nephi 16:9)



Parable of the Candlestick (Mark 4:21–25)

- “And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.”



Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30–32)

- “And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.”

- Be aware of “cross-textual contamination”
 - Mustard seed is *not* faith here



Some Matthean Additions



Matthew's Sermon in Parables (13:1-52)

- Sower (13:1-23)
 - Purpose of Parables (Narrative, 13:10-17)
 - Tenth Formula Quotation, 13:14b-15 = Isaiah 6:9-10
 - Parable of Sower Explained (13:18-23)
- **Wheat and Tares (13:24-30)**
- Mustard Seed (13:31-32; same as Mark here, but see 17:19-20 and Luke 13:18-19 for "faith" application)
- Leaven (13:33)
- Use of Parables (Discourse, 13:34-35)
 - Eleventh Formula Quotation, 13:35b = Psalm 78:2
- Parable of the Tares Explained (Discourse, 13:36-43)
- **Treasure, Pearl of Great Price, and Net Compared to Kingdom of Heaven (13:44-50)**
- **Scribe Prepared for the Kingdom (13:51-52)**



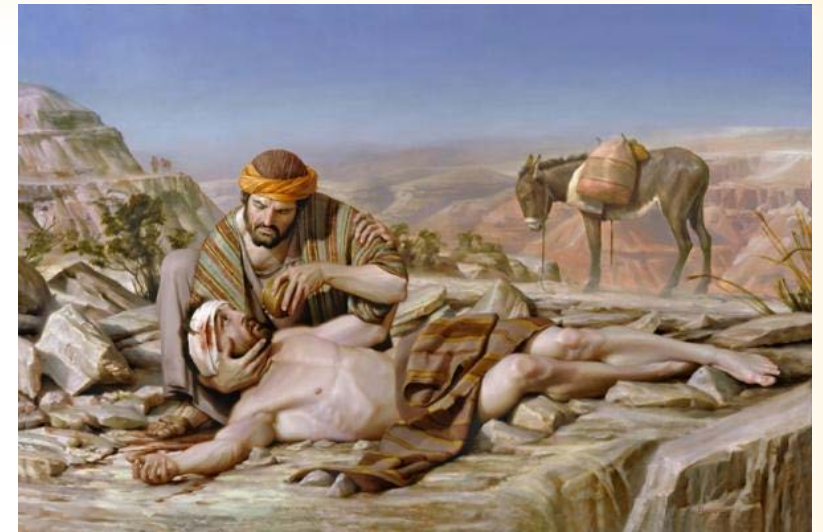
Lucan Parables

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PARABLES THAT ARE INCREASINGLY UNREAL OR UNEXPECTED

Stories Illustrating the Great Commandments (Luke 10:25–42)

- The Lawyer’s Question (10:25–28)
 - “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
 - “Thou shalt *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind*; and *thy neighbour as thyself*.”
- **Parable of the Good Samaritan** (10:29–37, example of loving neighbor)
- **Mary and Martha** (10:38–42, example of loving the Lord)
 - “Now Martha, who was *distracted with all the serving* . . .” (NJB 10:40)
 - *peri pollēn diakonian*: is *diakonian* about domestic service, the courses of the meal specifically, or service in general?
 - Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. *Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*” (NIV 41–42)
 - Service is usually highlighted . . . what is meant here?
 - *See also*: Bonnie D. Parkin, “Choosing Charity: That Good Part,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 104–106.



Joseph Brickey, “The Good Samaritan”



Walter Rane, “Mary Heard His Word”



William Holman Hunt, "The Importunate Neighbour"

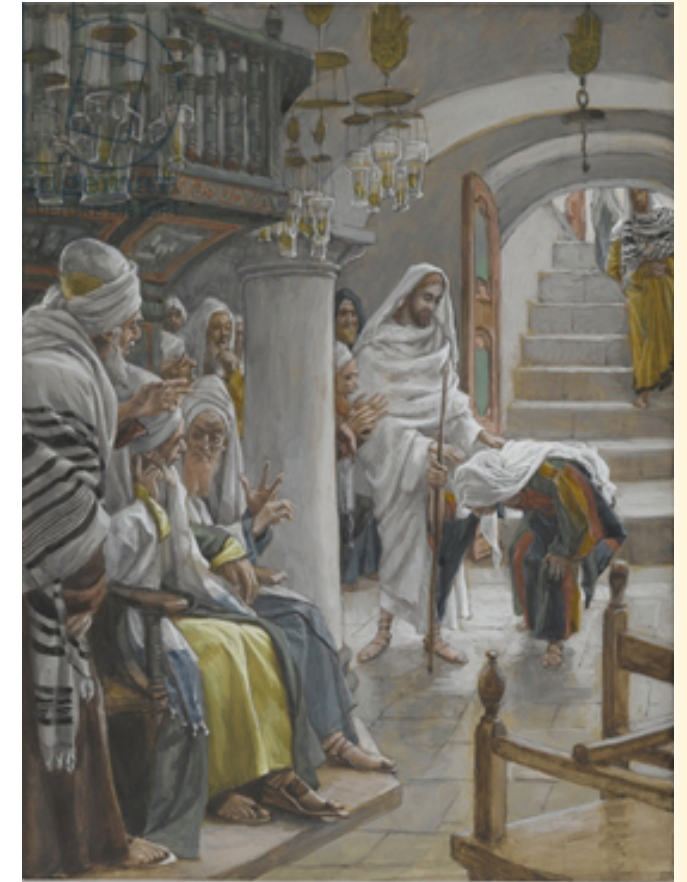


Parables Illustrating Prayer (Luke 11:1–13)

- The Lord's Prayer (Lucan version, 11:1–4)
- **Parable of the Friend at Midnight** (11:5–8, like with like)
- **Encouragement to Pray** (11:9–13, like with like but turns into unlike!)
 - “If **ye then, being evil**, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**”
- **Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge** (18:1–8, like with unlike)
 - Unreal situation: **a widow threatening to give a judge a black eye!**
 - “lest by her continual coming she weary me” in 18:5 literally translates “slap me in the face” (*hypopiaze*)
 - “And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? (18:7 NRSV; contra **like with like**, fathers and Father, in 11:11–14)

Responding to the Word (Luke 13:1–21)

- Repent or Perish (13:1–9)
 - The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (13:6–9)
- Healing the Bent Woman on the Sabbath (13:10–17)
- Parables of Growth (13:18–22)
 - Mustard Seed (13:18–19)
 - Woman Mixing Dough (13:20–21)



James Tissot, "The Woman with an Infirmity of Eighteen Years"

Parables of the Lost and Found (Luke 15:1–32)



- Introduction (15:1–2)
 - “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”
 - **Commensality** or “table fellowship”
- **The Lost Sheep** (15:3–7)
- **The Lost Coin** (15:8–10)
- **The Lost Son** (or Parable of the Prodigal Son and His Brother, 15:11–32)

Guercino, “The Parable of the Prodigal Son”