

Parables of the Kingdom

- What are parables?
- Understanding the parables
- Parables and the kingdom

© 2010 Brenda B. Collins 1

What Are Parables?

- Main vehicles for Jesus' kingdom teaching.
- Greek *parabole*, from Hebrew *mashal* –
 - Figurative form involving comparison.
 - Used in Jewish wisdom teaching.
 - *Meshalim* = Proverbs.

2

What Are Parables?

- Jesus teaches in parables (Mark 4:33-34).
- These are called “parables”:
- Proverb (physical heal yourself) - Lk. 4:23
- Figurative saying (wineskins) - Lk. 5:36-38
- Similitude (mustard seed) - Mk. 4:30-32
- Story (tenants) - Mk. 12:1-12 (esp. 1, 12)
- Allegory (soils) - Mk. 4:1-9, (esp. 2, 11, 13)

3

What Are Parables?

- “A metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”
 - C. H. Dodd
- Jesus' parables are designed to “reorder the symbolic world” of his audience, to retell the story of Israel with a subversive twist.
 - N. T. Wright

4

What Are Parables?

- Ideal for proclaiming “the mystery of the kingdom.”
 - Something hidden that is now revealed.
 - Not understood by everyone because not what they expected.
 - Good for proclaiming a subversive message.
 - Mt. 13:10-17, 34-35.

5

Understanding the Parables

- They aren't always self-interpreting.
- Receptivity is everything.
- Mark 4:1-20 - a parable about parables.
 - God is sending out his word to establish his kingdom, but in a surprising way.
 - This is happening through Jesus' ministry.
 - Your own attitude is crucial to whether this message takes root in you or not.
 - You must understand it to bear fruit.

6

Understanding the Parables

- They aren't always self-interpreting.
- Receptivity is everything.
- Mark 4:1-20 - a parable about parables.
- Quotation from Isaiah 6:9:
 - Does Jesus want to confuse people?
 - “So that” or “with the result that.”
 - Jesus' message brings a crisis of decision.

7

Understanding the Parables

- This parable creates the effect it describes.
 - It calls people to respond and thereby begins to sow the seed.
 - The disciples' ears are beginning to open.
 - Not a parable about predestination.
 - You can learn the secrets of the kingdom if you ask!
- Two historical contexts: Jesus' ministry, the Gospel writer and his audience.

8

Parables and the Kingdom

- Parables of the kingdom (Mt. 13) = how does the kingdom work in the world?

9

Parables and the Kingdom

What difference might it make in our Christian lives or ministries to understand the NT concept of the kingdom of God?

10