

Different kinds: Jesus' parables are not uniform.
Crisis: Jesus' parables open a new future.
Justice: Jesus' parables challenge the present.
History: Jesus' parables re-tell the past.

Look at the story	- how does it move; where does it lead?
Look at the angles	- can stories work more than one way?
Look at the world	- how is it changed through the story?
Look at yourself	- how can I extend the story into today?



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Stories of Life

Approaching the Parables



Downing Place URC
Lent 2023 (Week One)

Jerusalem to Jericho as the journey of life – or is it?

What do parables mean? What does 'mean' mean?
- does meaning belong to the speaker?
- or is it in the eye of the beholder?

OT and rabbis use illustrative story to refer (e.g. Nathan)
- so parables have precedent
- but Jesus was also highly original.

(Week One) **Different kinds of parable**

1. '**Comparison**': an idea, a snapshot, from life.
2. '**Parable proper**': a story,
but it comes from another area of life,
and relates indirectly to the intended meaning.
3. '**Example story**': a story,
from more-or-less the same area of life,
making its point quite directly.

Different kinds of insight ...

A. Parables of a coming crisis ...

Crisis	a day of threat (Luke 13:6-9, fig-tree) and danger (Luke 12:13-21, rich fool).
Call	time for urgent action (Luke 16:1-9, steward); & commitment (Matt 13:44-46, treasure+pearl)
Challenge	day of rejection (Mark 12:10-12, cornerstone); assurance of outcome (Mark 4, mustard)

Parables **shock, stir and compel**

B. Parables of justice

– a new lens on everyday issues

- Galilee:** growing estates not far away;
smart new towns, bringing wealthy people together;
honour-shame culture, binding life by convention.
- Sower: rent, taxes + tithes rob the crop; yet land has power.
- Labourers in vineyard: owner's dependence on the workers.
- Friend at midnight: friendship transcends convention.

Parables **uncover what's wrong** in people's daily lives.

C. Old stories in new clothes

We read reality thro telling stories.

Parables show the present within a larger story.

- Isaiah's vineyard (Isaiah 5, Mark 12):
a story of purpose, frustration & stewardship.
- Ezekiel (17:22-24) & Daniel's (4:21) great tree (Matt 13:31f):
the scruffy but energetic mustard.
- Waiting servants:
Israel waiting for God's return to Zion (Isaiah 52:7-10)

Parables **give Israel's story a focus in Jesus**