

Jesus has been called “The Master Teacher”, but an equally significant title would be “The Great Storyteller”. It is said that He did not say anything to the crowds without using a parable¹. He used them to invite his hearers to see something they might not otherwise see, without using a commanding tone². Though the stories were new and interesting, they did not add or subtract to the Truth³. He made it clear, though, that these could only be understood and appreciated by those who were willing to listen⁴.

Jesus used the curiosity and even shock values of parables to combat the conventional wisdom of the times. He wanted to get people to shift gears and change direction and look at things from a different angle. It is still the Truth, but we can obtain an expanded appreciation for it. Jesus wants to provide us images that provoke us to think, and which capitalize on our love of solving puzzles.

He showed in His ministry a great variety of healing and teaching methods; truly, in a similar way, the creation of the universe itself involved putting component pieces together for the many forms we see in nature. And the apostle Peter spoke of the grace of God in its various forms⁵, so we know that there are “infinitely rich treasures that can speak to us in a plurality of ways⁶”.

I wonder why the New Testament writers, who knew of Jesus’ stories very intimately, did not use the same approach to spreading the gospel of the Kingdom. I feel that they still have a place, and so I write stories that are intended to make us think of the truths of Jesus with a slightly different perspective. I place things from the Scriptures together in different ways with no intent to add or subtract from God’s Word. The very origin of the word “parable” has to do with placing things side by side for comparison⁷, and that is what I am trying to do.

This recombination or reshaping of ideas does not mean that the spiritual truth is being altered, but re-presented in a new way that encourages us to probe further into it. It is creating other tools that can be used to better prepare us for the work of the Kingdom, and to do battle in a different type of war.

1. Mark 4:34-35
2. from Marcus J. Borg, in Meeting Jesus again for the First Time
3. Matthew 5:17-18
4. Matthew 13:10-17
5. 1 Peter 4:10
6. from Peter Rollins, How (Not) to Speak of God
7. George A. Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus

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Parables; why they are not used to communicate in the post-Christ period; Paul does not use them; Jesus the Master Teacher – best is parables, not lectures (but taught as a lecture)

There is no experience that doesn't contain a lesson or truth from God – we just have to look for it so we can "see" it. Hsl

We can create parables from real events; making changes to consider different choices, etc; The desire to create stories; like weaving with different pieces of ideas

Jesus was not a theologian. He was a God who told stories. See *Walking on Water*, Madeleine L'Engle, p. 54

Jesus wants us to think about it before being given the answer; it is perhaps a "license" to probe

Mark 4:34-35; 34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." [Psalm 78:2 quote]

The aphorisms and parables of Jesus function in a particular way: they are invitational forms of speech. Jesus used them to invite his hearers to see something they might not otherwise see. *Meeting Jesus again for the First Time*, p. 70. The appeal is not to the will – not "Do this" – but rather, "Consider seeing it this way." As invitational forms of speech, the parables do not invoke external authority. They do not appeal to divine authority, as do the speech forms of divine lawgivers ("Thus says the Lord, you shall...") and inspired prophets ("Hear the word of the Lord...") *Meeting Jesus again for the First Time*, p.

[Norton telling stories about Jesus] ... I'd like to tell you some of my favorite memories... the style is informal the content is basically *informed imagination*... come along with me... *The Gospel According to Norton*, Grady Nutt, p. 25

I see myself (as a writer) as a person **making bricks, but not knowing how to put them together to make something useful**. So then I wonder why I am making bricks.

Matthew 5:17-18; 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matt 13:10-17; 10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" 11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

Reality is too rich to be taken in at a single glance; **it must be viewed from many perspectives**. Faith, Science & Understanding, John Polkinghorne, p.13;

God gives some information (the Scriptures), and He wants to see what we build on it that fits (not adding to or subtracting from); Warning: do not add or subtract to God's Word; When Jesus spoke in parables, then, He was not adding or subtracting – only bringing out new perspectives

[parable] The word means literally "a throwing aside". *The Parables of Jesus*, George A. Buttrick, p. xv [putting things side by side for comparison]

Coming to know God; like working a jigsaw puzzle; is it better to work it or get it exactly right? We must enjoy the process; when it is over, then we are done and we might post it on the wall; We cannot fit all of the pieces together to configure a complete picture of God ... The person who hid their talent was being "safe"; but God showed that this is totally unacceptable; like the puzzle, **we must risk working with the pieces even though we can't always find the ones that fit together**. God wants us to work the puzzle; we don't have to get the picture completed or exactly right; we

may try to force them, but God overlooks that if we are in pursuit; Placing ideas together to see if it helps us understand

Parallel to the story of Scheherazade; telling such fascinating stories that she avoided a dire fate; Jesus was like this in that people loved to hear His stories – but He did not quibble with the truth and His enemies quit listening and did not want to hear anymore.

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The variety of ways in which Jesus healed and taught others; like the spectrum or layers
1 Cor 12:12; the various parts of the body; assembling in different ways for different personalities

God created / formed; Gen 1 (many different things about of basic substances; periodic table)
1 Peter 4:10; Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

A parable is the perfect tool... It has the indirect, one-pointed quality of a joke, and like a joke is complete in itself, implying rather than stating the real purpose for which it was told. *It does not tell outright: it hints, suggests, puzzles, challenges...* By its deceptive simplicity it relaxes people into seeing something that in ordinary wariness they would refuse to look at – as Lincoln knew when he used jokes to make sensitive points with members of his cabinet and staff. Jesus: Man and Master, Mary C. Morrison, p. 38.

Robert Webber, a wonderfully influential and now deceased Wheaton professor, offers us an invitation: "So I invite you to read the Bible," he said, "*not for bits and pieces of dry information [pieces in a puzzle]*, but as the story of God's embrace of the world told in poetic images and types." The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible, McKnight, Scot, p.59

In opposition to this, many Christian communities view the stories and parables of the Bible as raw material to be translated into a single, understandable meaning rather than experienced as *infinitely rich treasures that can speak to us in a plurality of ways*. How (Not) to Speak of God, Rollins, Peter, p.17

Our interpretations of the Bible must then be *understood more as temporary shelters than eternal structures*. We never finish reading the Bible but always find ourselves standing on its threshold, ready to read again. How (Not) to Speak of God, Rollins, Peter, p.64

"The psalms do not theologize," writes Kathleen Norris in The Closer Walk; "One reason for this is that the psalms are poetry, and poetry's *function is not to explain but to offer images and stories that resonate with our lives*." The Bible Jesus Read, Yancey, p. 113

Re-forming in a bad way: Is 44:12-13; Jeremiah 18:4; marred in the hands of the potter, and reshaped

Lack of respect; ignore; preaching; warning; teaching; expert; Ezekiel 20:49; They are saying of me, "Isn't he just telling parables?"