

12 –Gospel Stories

Scattered Seed

The disciples asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” Jesus replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. (Matt 13:10-11)

The parable Jesus had just told was the parable of the seed scattered over the four types of soil. It is a parable that instructs us about evangelism.

The disciples were perplexed as to why Jesus didn't explain things more clearly – and persuasively. I'm sure we all feel the same. The best approach is surely to share the Gospel as clearly and persuasively as possible. Explain the need for salvation and the way of salvation. Dismantle their misconceptions. Argue with false ideas. Expose foolish philosophies.

But Jesus does not agree! He chose to evangelise with short memorable stories and simple personal exchanges.

Jesus scattered seeds.

Soil-Dependant Evangelism

Jesus did not concern himself with the power of His arguments to persuade. The seed He sowed was top-quality God given story. He trusted in the Holy Spirit to work His word into the minds and hearts of his hearers. Jesus knew that the effectiveness of His witness depended on the soil, not the seed.

The Sword of the Spirit

We all readily admit that we do not have the power to bring someone to faith. But the way we go about evangelism often makes it look like we give it our very best shot! We try to share our gospel explanations; we try to get people to answer our big questions; we try to dismantle their objections.

But God had already told us what works... and it isn't our best arguments:

The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

God tells us that His word is what penetrates to divide soul and spirit. He tells us that it is the Spirit who works that sword into people's hearts. And He has given us the words to use – the very same words that Jesus used, as recorded for us - the parables and narrative of the Gospels.

Answering with Stories

Jesus mostly seemed to provoke discussion and answer questions with short stories. We should give it a try!

How would you answer someone who says, "I don't need to go to church. I am a good person. If God loves like you say He does, I will go the heaven."

Well, you might (perhaps) agree that they don't need to go to church to be "saved", and then try to explain how we have all sinned and fall short of God's standards etc. etc.

Or you could simply tell them a parable; perhaps the parable of the wise and foolish builders. If they show any interest in that story, you could then get them to read the few verses before where Jesus says, "Many will say to me Lord Lord... but I will say to them depart from me..." (Matt 7:21-27).

If those stories do not get them thinking deeply, then they are poor soil.

Perhaps someone says "I used to go to church but I'm happy with my life as it is." We could tell them the story of the four soils. If their heart is not hardened, perhaps they will start to think about what kind of soil they are.

Perhaps someone says, "No Thanks. I'm not interested." Perhaps we could simply say, "That's OK. Jesus said he didn't come for those who are well, but for those who are sick." The Holy Spirit might use those words as an irritant to get under their skin and make them start thinking.

Being Ready

We need to prepare to share the Gospel. Specifically, we need to think about how we can use the parables and narrative of the Gospels to sow seeds into people hearts. Perhaps we should list some of the parables and make notes about how we could use them.

We can practice in pairs trying to answer questions with Gospel stories. We could prepare cards with some of the stories printed on them.