

Lesson 10

Proper 10

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

In Jesus' day, a teacher would sit to do his formal teaching. His students gathered around him, either seated or standing. This custom was definitely followed in the synagogues, but Jesus evidently usually sat as He taught also in the countryside. In this instance, because the size of the crowd required that He be some distance from them, Jesus arranged for an unusual chair from which to teach.

Our English word *parable* comes directly from the Greek *parabole*. It carried the meaning of placing two things side by side. Jesus told stories that His hearers could understand and relate to—placing them “side by side” with a truth about life in the kingdom of God. A simple definition has been suggested: “A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

This is an effective way of teaching, as every preacher or teacher knows. According to Jesus, He used parables to serve two purposes: to deepen the understanding and interest of those who listened in faith and to hide the truth from those who would not believe. (See Matthew 13:10–17.)

The lesson of a parable turns on its point of comparison. It is important to look for that point. It is a mistake to give some symbolic meanings to every detail of the story. He didn't always explain His parables, but here Jesus did explain His parable of the sower. With His help, we easily analyze the parable and get the point.

142. What is the point of comparison on which the spiritual lesson turns? Select an adjective to describe each of the kinds of people pictured by the four kinds of soil.

143. With which of the kinds of soil do you relate in your life experience? What does each kind of soil teach you for your life as a Christian?

144. The traditional title of this parable is the parable of the sower, taken from the text of Matthew itself. As Jesus explained the parable, what title might more appropriately focus on the point it makes?

145. What encouragement does this parable bring to sowers of the Word?

“He who has ears, let him hear” places awesome responsibility on those who hear the Word. Franzmann says in *Follow Me*, “Man has the fatal freedom of shutting himself up against the word which God speaks to him, the very word which he hears and understands” (p. 123). All preachers know that the effectiveness of their sermons lies only 10 percent in their tongues and 90 percent in the ears of their hearers.

146. How can you approach Bible study or the lessons and sermons in church in ways that will make you a more effective hearer?

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 55:10–13

These familiar words are part of what Horace Hummel, in *The Word Becoming Flesh*, calls “an invitation to ‘every one who thirsts’ to a free Messianic banquet” (p. 225). Then he adds parenthetically: “Yet in the afterglow of chap. 53 we do not forget that it was very costly to the Giver.” The Giver, the Servant of the Lord, invited the thirsty to “come to the waters” to “buy wine and milk without money and without price” (v. 1). He promised renewal of the “everlasting covenant, My steadfast, sure love for David” (v. 3). He urged, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; . . . for He will abundantly pardon” (vv. 6–7). He reminded that the Lord’s ways and thoughts are as high above man’s “as the heavens are higher than the earth” (v. 9).

147. In this pericope, the Lord spoke through the Servant to point to the effective agent by which He will accomplish His purpose in the world. What is that agent? What simile is used to illustrate its effectiveness?

148. What is the double purpose for which God sends His Word into the world? (See Romans 3:19–20; 1:16–17; 10:14–17.)

149. What assurance do we gain as we hear the Lord say about His Word: “It shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it”? What is the picture that awaits those who will “go out in joy and be led forth in peace”? What will be the end result of the fulfillment of this prophecy?

150. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today’s Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 8:12–17

Romans 8 is Paul’s great description of the Holy Spirit as God at work—making the redemption accomplished by Jesus fully effective *in* us. The continuing activity of the Spirit is seen in the Greek *agontai*, “being led,” in a grammatical form that describes a continuing, durative process.

151. How does the Holy Spirit assert His leading in our lives? (See Romans 1:16–17; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23–25.)

152. What will be the continuing result of the Spirit's leading? How is the spirit of slavery different from the Spirit of adoption as sons?

153. Of what is Paul reminding us by telling us that by the Spirit we cry, "Abba! Father!"? How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are God's children?

"Provided we suffer with Him" is immediately softened, and our reception of its message is encouraged, by Paul's pointing to the glory that Jesus Christ is given now and will be given forever—a glory that those who are His will fully enjoy with Him in heaven.

154. How may we "suffer with Him" as His disciples? How may we also "be glorified with Him"?

Note that Paul continued in verse 18 with this reminder for his readers: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."