

## Stories Told, Lessons Learned

Mat.13:34-35

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It is not for pleasure, for profit, for popularity but for prophecy that Jesus spoke in parables - "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." (Mat.13:34-35; Psa.78:2) Mark tells us that Jesus spoke in parables but the people were limited in their understanding of them. But Jesus when alone explained everything to His disciples. (Mk.4:33-34)

With parables comes deep meaning, deeper than the story itself. Jesus explained to His disciples why He used parables but often times left off the explanations to the crowds because it was not for them to know everything that was hidden concerning the Kingdom. (Mat.13:10-17)

There is a group of Jesus' parables that I find to be intriguing and they all have this similar introductory phrase: "the kingdom of heaven is like". Even in this narrowing of the field there are three different emphases being made by the Master Story Teller: What the Kingdom of God "is" Like, What the Kingdom of God "will be" like and "What shall we say" the Kingdom of God is Like.

1. What the Kingdom of God "is" Like - Mark 4:26-29 – Growing Seed
2. What the Kingdom of God "will be" like – Mat.25:1-13 – Ten Virgins
3. "What shall we say" the Kingdom of God is Like –
  - Mat.13:24-30, 36-43 – Weeds/Weeds explained
  - Mat.13:31-32 – Mustard Seed
  - Mat.13:33 – Yeast
  - Mat.13:44 – Hidden Treasure
  - Mat.13:45-46 – Valuable Pearl

- Mat.13:47-50 – Net
- Mat.18:23-34 – Unmerciful Servant
- Mat.20:1-16 - Workers in the Vineyard
- Mat.22:2-14 – Wedding Banquet

Each of these comparisons helps shed a little light on what the Kingdom of God here on earth is to be like. To bring this a little closer, consider these stories as windows to view what the Church is to look like which is the Kingdom of God here on earth. Does that shift help make these stories a little more personal?

These are not stories with no application and they are certainly not stories about some far off distant land called "the Kingdom of God" and they are not stories about some mythical utopian kingdom of wishful thinking.

For you who teach these parables of Jesus there is one "Kingdom of God is like" that may have application. Although the phrase is present the emphasis of the sentence is from another direction -

"Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." ("Jesus" - Mat.13:52)

Therefore, as you tell the stories, pull from the resources of your storeroom treasures new and old so that understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven might become known in the minds of the next generation of our children.