

## **PARABLES OF JESUS PART 2**

### Generation of Grippers – Two Debtors – Subduing the Strong Man

Last week we started a study into the parables of Jesus. We defined Jesus's parables as, "illustrations borrowed from everyday life that convey a spiritual truth." And then we noted several practical reasons that Jesus used parables. That is the subject of Q1, which is a review question. What are some practical reasons that Jesus used parables? All of the reasons listed. One, to make it easier for the uneducated to understand His teachings. Two, to make His teachings more interesting. Three, to keep the attention of His audience. Four, to make the truths He taught easier to remember.

### **Closed Minds and Closed Hearts**

A fifth reason I gave is a bit mysterious and last week I got a little pushback on it. That reason was that Jesus told parables is to hide the meaning from those people who were indifferent to the truth. That seems strange, doesn't it? You would think that Jesus would want everyone to know the truth. Right? Just for the record, I did not make that reason up. I actually got it from scripture and I want to go ahead and start there. It is based on something Jesus Himself said and it came in response to His disciples. So, let me read the passage for you. It comes from Matthew Chapter 13...

Then the disciples came and said to Him [Jesus], "Why do You speak to them [the crowds] in parables?" And He answered them, "To you [the disciples] it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the crowds] it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:10-13).

When Jesus is teaching, He is generally speaking to a mixed audience. There were some listening to Him who were searching for the truth. However, sadly, many others were not. The problem that Jesus was dealing with -- closed minds and closed hearts. And Isaiah had dealt with it back in his day with his audience, the same problem 700 years earlier. And so, what Jesus does next here in this passage is He quotes from the prophet Isaiah, something that was applicable to His day...

“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them’” (Matthew 13:14-15).

There is something preventing their understanding. It is their closed hearts.

But blessed are your eyes [speaking to His disciples], for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matthew 13:16-17).

So, many of the people that came and were listening to Jesus were there – as I like to say – “to watch the Jesus show.” They wanted to see what miracle Jesus would perform next. There were a lot of people in that group. Then there were a lot of people who really enjoyed listening to Jesus’s dynamic teaching. He was teaching like nobody they had ever heard. Some who heard Jesus speak were open-minded to His message. However, others were apathetic or close-minded.

By using parables, those in the audience who were willing and eager to hear the truth of Jesus’s message would find it. They would understand it. It would make sense to them. On the other hand, those who were indifferent to the truth would NOT find it. To this group the parables that

Jesus taught were nothing more than stories. They missed the deeper meaning behind them.

William Barclay in his commentary on this passage says this: "The parable conceals truth from those who are either too lazy to think or too blinded by prejudice to see. It puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the individual. It reveals truth to [the person] who desires truth; it conceals truth from [the one] who does not wish to see the truth."

*[One person commented that "we need more seekers." There were certainly some of those in the crowds that Jesus spoke to.]*

The disciples understood because they were probably sitting there at night with Jesus saying, "That parable You told today was really interesting, Jesus." And then Jesus would explain it to them because He was engaging one-on-one with them. These were the ones who left everything and followed Him. So, they understood. And many of those (in the crowd) who had the seeking hearts were "getting it" because the Holy Spirit was revealing it to them. Those who were like, "That is interesting," but could really care less, they did not ever get the deeper meaning.

So, I hope that helps to clarify some things from last time.

### **A Generation of Grippers**

Let me set the scene for this next parable. You all remember John the Baptist. He was a messenger who was sent by God. He preached repentance. His mission was to prepare the hearts of God's people for the coming of their Messiah. He was the forerunner. He was the "Elijah" that Malachi spoke about. He was that "voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Matthew 3:3). The common people heard John's message and many of them repented. However, the hyper-religious Pharisees openly rejected John's message and instead chose to live their own way (which they thought was the right way). Jesus uses this next parable to expose the religious leaders of His day for who they really were.

Jesus is somewhere in Galilee. We are not quite sure where He was because He is traveling around the Sea of Galilee to various cities. He is talking one day and He is teaching somewhere in Galilee when we come to the next passage in Luke Chapter 7...

“To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’ For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man [Jesus speaking about Himself] has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at Him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by all her children” (Luke 7:31-35).

Q2, who is Jesus referring to specifically in v 31, as “the people of this generation”? He is talking about the Pharisees. He is comparing the Pharisees to children playing some sort of a make-believe game. You all remember, when we were kids, we all played make-believe. That was a fun game. Sometimes we even dressed up to play the part. These children are no different. They are playing some sort of make-believe game. And like these children, the Pharisees are wanting to be noticed. They want to be the center of attention – “Look at us! Look at what we did!” The Pharisees are pretending to be religious. They are playing a part, like these little children playing a game. All the while they are neglecting that which was most important. And that is -- their very own souls. Rather than heed John’s call to repentance, and then later Jesus’s call, the Pharisees criticized them. They criticized the messengers, the preachers.

According to Jesus in v 33 (this is the answer to Q3), they accused John the Baptist of being demon possessed. We do not have a scripture where they actually did this, but apparently some did. This same group would later, v 34 (here is the answer to Q4), accuse Jesus of being a drunkard and a glutton.

So, Q5, true or false, the accusations levied against John and Jesus were without merit. True. They were completely unfounded. John was NOT demon possessed. Jesus was NOT a drunkard and a glutton. The truth is that the Pharisees hated both John and Jesus so much that they resorted to name calling. Does that sound familiar in our world today?

*[Class comment about why John the Baptist might have been rejected and looked down on. It may have been partially based on his very odd physical appearance. The religious leaders dismissed John as a crazy man.]*

### **Exposing Religious Hypocrites**

Jesus and John were hated for the same reason. They were speaking the truth. And the Pharisees did not like the fact that both Jesus and John exposed them for the religious hypocrites that they were.

V 35 is an interesting verse: "Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." Q6 asks, who do you think Jesus is referring to as "wisdom's children"? Obviously, somebody who is wise, right? But who would be wise in Jesus' view? Believers, Christians, followers, yes. So, it would be anyone who heeded the messages of John and Jesus, that repented, that believed. The fact that the message changed their lives, gave them a whole new way of living, is evidence that there was something to what John and Jesus said. It had to be true. It was not just a nice "truth." It changed people's lives! So, that validated the message. It also proved that the accusations of the Pharisees against John and Jesus were false. So, God's truth always prevails. Evildoers, no matter how they may disguise themselves (sometimes even as religious leaders) are ultimately exposed for who they really are.

I thought it was interesting in the message today, the pastor was talking about Jeremiah. In his day there were false prophets telling the people in exile, "You guys won't be here for very long." That sounds good. That was the message people wanted to hear so they followed it. But a false message no matter how nice it sounds is still a false message. So, Jeremiah says, "Don't listen to those guys. You are going to be here for a

while, 70 years." Sometimes evildoers will disguise themselves as very religious people.

### **The Two Debtors**

So, Jesus is still in His Galilean Ministry. This next parable comes a short time later. One of the Pharisees, a man named Simon – this seems strange – he asks Jesus to have dinner with him. So, that shows you that not all the Pharisees were hostile to Jesus. We know that there were a whole bunch that were, but there were some Pharisees who actually were pretty friendly to Jesus (like Nicodemus who we see in John's Gospel). Anyway, this Pharisee named Simon invites Jesus to dinner. So, Jesus accepts his invitation and He went to his house. While Jesus was dining in Simon's home, a woman entered the house, knelt down at the feet of Jesus and anointed His feet with an expensive perfume. Now, we presume that this woman had a questionable reputation because when Simon sees her do this, he remarks (probably to his other Pharisee friends there), "If this Man were a prophet [speaking of Jesus], He would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39).

Jesus's reply to Simon's rather insensitive comment leads to the following parable, the Parable of the Two Debtors. This is in Luke Chapter 7 beginning in v 40...

And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And He said to him, "You have judged rightly" (Luke 7:40-43).

Q7, who do the two debtors in this parable represent? The two debtors simply represent two sinners. Certainly, the woman who washed Jesus's feet was a sinner. Simon the Pharisee was a sinner. And Jesus may have

had two unnamed sinners in mind. In fact, since we are ALL sinners, then anyone who heard this parable or reads it later (like us), that could be us too. So, all of these would apply. You have the specific application. But then you have a broader application.

I am going to skip to Q9, who does the moneylender represent? God. If the debtors represent sinners, then who is our sin debt to? Our sin debt is to God. He would be the moneylender.

Back to Q8, true or false? Simon the Pharisee did not know how to answer Jesus. That is false because he answered Jesus and he answered Him correctly. In v 43 Jesus tells Simon, "You have judged rightly." Give Simon some credit. He gave Jesus the right answer. Sometimes Jesus would ask the Pharisees a question and they would not answer. Simon, to his credit answered Jesus, "I suppose the one who owed him more." Good one, Simon. You have answered rightly. He gave Jesus the right answer. The one who owed God (the moneylender) more, who sinned the more, would love Him more because he has been forgiven more.

There is a cost, a penalty associated with sin – death, right? That sin debt had to be paid. Who paid that sin debt? Jesus. And He paid it in full. Some of us, like this woman at Simon's home with the questionable reputation, in our minds at least, in our way of looking at things, we are deeper in debt to God than maybe some people who have not sinned as much, like Simon the Pharisee. That is our way of thinking. It is how we look at it. But Jesus reminds Simon the Pharisee that he too is a sinner and that God is in the business of forgiving sins no matter how much or how little we have sinned. God forgives sins. What Jesus is saying to Simon is, "You and her are in the same boat. You are both sinners that need forgiveness."

### **God and Forgiveness**

God wants to forgive our sin debt. I have a great verse and you all know this verse. It is 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to

perish but for ALL to come to repentance.” That is God’s desire. He wants everyone to be saved. Is everyone going to be saved? No. But God’s desire is that they are saved. It falls on them to respond to the message that they have been given.

God can only forgive our sin debt if we will accept His one and only condition of salvation, which is, faith and trust in Jesus Christ. It is a limited time offer, but it has eternal benefits. So, accept the offer while you can. You never know when you are going to draw your last breath.

As you read on, the story has a happy ending. Jesus does something for the woman who washed His feet. Q10 asks, what did Jesus do for this woman? He forgave her sins, much to the chagrin of Simon and his religious friends. If you read it, they ask, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” (Luke 7:49). “Who is this guy?” The Son of God! He does forgive her sins. That was her greatest need, wasn’t it?

### **Subduing the Strong Man**

The next parable is in response to a verbal attack by the Jerusalem scribes against Jesus. Now, He is still in Galilee and these scribes come up from Jerusalem. They have heard about this Jesus guy. They begin to verbally attack Him. They accuse Jesus of being possessed by a demon. They said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul [the devil]. He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons...He has an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:22 and 30). Jesus, who had been observed casting out demons earlier in the chapter, Mark Chapter 3, He asks them a question: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” (Mark 3:23). That makes no sense. Their charge against Him is completely illogical. Why would Satan do battle against himself? Simple answer – he would not!

“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” (Mark 3:24-25).

So, according to Jesus, Q11, what will happen to a kingdom or a house divided against itself? It will not be able to stand. It will collapse.

“And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end” (Mark 3:26).

So, the one who is creating all the disorder in Satan’s domain is NOT Satan. It has to be someone who opposes Satan, Satan’s enemy. Who is that? Jesus. Jesus was most certainly NOT in collusion with the devil (as He had been accused of by the scribes). Rather, He was on a collision course with him. Jesus and Satan are enemies. They are on opposite sides. Jesus uses the following parable (one verse, v 27) to underscore His point. It is the Parable of Subduing the Strong Man. Here it is:

“But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man.” [Why is that? Because the strong man is going to beat him up.] “Then indeed he may plunder his house” (Mark 3:27).

[Q12], in this parable who is the strong man and who is the one that subdues him? The strong man is Satan. The one subduing him is Jesus.

Now, you must first bind the strong man, restrain him. You have to make sure that he can’t do you any harm when you go over there and plan to do what you are going to do in his house. If I go into Richard’s house this week and I want to steal some of his stuff – if I am going to do it while he is there, I need to make sure that I somehow subdue Richard (maybe tie him up or knock him over the head or something) because he is going to beat me up if I try to take his stuff! Any person is going to defend their territory and their possessions the best they can.

We human beings do not have the power to go into Satan’s domain and defeat him. We are no match for the devil. He is an angelic being and is much stronger than we mortals are, as are his demons. However, Jesus DID enter Satan’s domain and He DID bind him and plunder his house. When did Jesus do this? Earlier in Mark Chapter 3 when He cast out those demons. That is the point of this whole parable. That is the whole context. Jesus encountered people who were demon-possessed. They were under Satan’s control and power. Jesus restrained Satan by His will. Then, after

he had Satan restrained, He commanded the demons to come out of the people and what happened? They came out – not always quietly, kicking and screaming in some cases – but they came out. There was nothing Satan could do about it because he had been restrained by the power of almighty God.

The religious leaders of Jesus's day were obviously clueless as to who Jesus was. To accuse Him of being demon-possessed just shows you how clueless they were. They were spiritually blind. They had closed their minds to Jesus's claim to be the Son of God.

### **The Unforgivable Sin**

I want to close our study this morning with an addendum to this parable, which I think is really important. It comes in v 28...

"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying [about Jesus], "He has an unclean spirit" (Mark 3:28-30).

Q13, True or false? The Pharisees had been guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Absolutely true. One way to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is to attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. This is precisely what the scribes were doing. It was a very serious charge!

Q14, in v 29 Jesus says, "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." Why is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit considered to be such a serious sin?

*[Class responses included that it is rejecting Christ, unrepentance of sin, ascribing undue power to Satan.]*

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is the One that speaks to our conscience and convicts us of our sin and who draws us to God. The Holy Spirit reveals to us many things about God from the scriptures (His character, goodness, that He wants to forgive us and that He has provided a way to

be saved, to have a relationship with Him through His Son Jesus, and so much more).

If we reject the Spirit and say, "I don't believe all that. Leave me alone. I am going to do things my own way. I am just going to believe what I want to believe. You have a right to believe what you want to believe... you just leave me alone." If we do that, what more can God do for us? He has done everything He can for us. He has given us the truth. He has convicted of that we are wrong. If we say, "Leave me alone," what more can He do? We have hardened our hearts. So, that is why it is so serious.

That is what the religious leaders were doing in Jesus's day. That is what they were guilty of – flat out rejecting Jesus's message. They resisted. They rejected the Holy Spirit's conviction. You know He was convicting them. Some Pharisees actually did believe in Jesus and repented. We know that from later from the Jerusalem Council in Acts Chapter 15. But most of them did not. Most of them rejected Jesus.

The conviction of sin is a gift given to us that will allow God to transform us. Without the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, I would never have changed. I would not have. Left to my own self, I would have been like, "I don't need that!" I would never have changed. But He convicted me of my sin and I realized I needed to repent. I needed to make Jesus my Lord. So, to reject Him leaves nothing for us except death. This is why blaspheming against and resisting the Holy Spirit are so serious.

### **Application**

We had three different parables. This is what I came away with:

A Generation of Grippers: Those who believe the Gospel and allow it to change their lives are the "children of wisdom" (those who believe). All others are religious phonies. They are just like little kids playing a game of make believe. I have a good verse for you: "But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

The Two Debtors: We must never forget that we are all sinners (to that I say, "Amen!"). As believers in Christ, we have been forgiven a huge debt that we could never pay ourselves. Do not ever forget that. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Great verses!

Subduing the Strong Man: Satan and the influence of evil in our world are strong. But our great and sovereign God is much, much stronger. "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for HE who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

When we come back next time, we are going to pick back up with the Kingdom of God parables. There is a whole series of those in Matthew Chapter 13 – eight parables in that chapter about the kingdom of God and many of them you are familiar with.