



WELCOME TO MY WORLD STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 2: JANUARY 20 - 26, 2019

CAUTIONARY TALES

SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 13:1-23

Reflections: Recorded for us within the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are Jesus' parables. Coming from a compound Greek word for "to throw" and "alongside of," a parable was a memorable way to compare, or "throw alongside," a known truth with an unknown truth. Based on activities of everyday life, parables were a way for Jesus to communicate deep and life-changing truths in a simple, easy to understand manner.

Jesus was using parables to reveal the "secrets" or mysteries of the Kingdom, truths not previously revealed in the Old Testament, to His disciples. To do this He chose to teach in parables and explain the parable in more detail to His disciples in private at a later time.

It is widely believed that He was also speaking in parables to conceal these "secrets" from the people. By this time in Matthew 13, Israel had made their decision about Jesus and had rejected Him (cf. Matthew 9:24; 12: 22-27). The people Jesus found Himself surrounded by had come not to hear His message but to be healed by Him. So, to avoid the reactions of people who would not receive his message, Jesus spoke in parables to conceal these "secrets" of the Kingdom of God but reveal it to His disciples.

In His explanation of the parable to His disciples, Jesus quoted almost verbatim from Isaiah 6:9-10:

“Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”¹

Isaiah, like Jesus, preached to a people not willing to receive His message. In quoting Isaiah’s words, Jesus was stating that this prophecy applied, or “was fulfilled”, by His present audience. The people were repeating the same the same pattern of behavior from Isaiah’s day, a hard-hearted response towards God’s message.

Years following Isaiah ministry, his audience would receive judgment from God for their response to His message in the form of the Babylonian Captivity. Jesus’ teaching in parables to unbelieving Israel, in part at least, was a kind of judgment from God. Jesus would no longer teach them plainly. He would preach to them in parables and only those who sought out further explanation would know their true meaning. The “secrets” of the kingdom would only be available for those who truly desired to receive them.

We too face a similar choice as we read the parables of Jesus. Will we receive God’s message He has for us or not? Will we take the time to examine the Word in order to understand the timeless truth it teaches? Will we have ears to hear and hearts to understand the message of God for us?

Prayer Thought (Adaptation of Old Anglican Prayer):

Father, what we know not, teach us. What we are not, make us. What we have not, give us. For Christ’s sake.
Amen

Application Question:

Is my life bearing good fruit?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have a heart to receive God’s message? What soil from the Parable of the Sower do you best relate to?
2. Are there any parables that you feel you do not fully understand? Are they worthy of your time to understand them?

Suggestions for Further Research:

Check-out this short videos on parables:

[youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=1hH4iEAdBDw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=25&v=1hH4iEAdBDw)