


The Parables of Jesus



The
Deceitfulness
of Self-
Righteousness

The kingdom of heaven is like...

The Parables of Jesus – Deceitfulness of Self-Righteousness

What's a Parable?

A short story that reveals or conceals an unseen spiritual reality (kingdom secret) through the use of familiar images, objects, people and/or events

Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables?

1. Test of the heart: Receptive vs Unreceptive
2. Deconstruct common beliefs and attitudes that are contrary to God's design and desires
3. Challenge the hearer's perception of reality and truth by revealing how God sees things

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Luke 18:9-14

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’

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Luke 18:9-14

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

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The Context: Who Can Enter the Kingdom?

- Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem along the Samaria and Galilee boarder
- Jesus has been teaching in parables and has just answered the question, “When will the kingdom come?” before a series of parables and events that answer the question, “Who can enter the kingdom?”
- Second of 2 parables involving prayer
- Luke 17:20b... “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed...”

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The Problem:

The belief that religious performance justifies one in God's sight

- Pharisee represents the pinnacle of religious zeal, commitment and obedience to the law from the human perspective
- Tax collector represents the worst of characters (traitors, extortionists, immoral, experts in injustice) and one who would be considered to be without a chance to receive God's approval

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The Kingdom Secrets:

1. Religious performance does not entitle you to God's approval
2. Self-righteousness produces pride, spiritual comparison and contempt
3. You can never stoop too low for God to save
4. Humility, not our own righteousness, is how we receive God's mercy and enter his kingdom

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The Mirror of the Parable:

Two Extremes – Who do you identify with?

- a. **The Pharisee...** *Has self-righteousness crept up on you?*
 - Do you feel that others are not carrying their share of the load? Do you feel like no one else works as hard as you do?
 - Do you struggle comparing yourself with others? Do you have your own “thank God I’m not like them” list?
- b. **The Tax-collector...** *Are you willing to lay down your pride to receive the mercy of Jesus?*
 - Have you conceded that you are unable to receive God’s grace – that your sin is too great?