

Additional Lesson D—Parables

The Sower and the Seed

Bible Reading: Mark 4:1-20, 33-34

Learn by Heart: The catechist will select Learn by Heart material for review.

New Testament Terms:

parable

————— To the Catechist —————

Central Thoughts on Parables

- ♦ Parables are figurative stories that teach the mysteries and paradoxes of the Christian faith.
- ♦ Parables are intended primarily to catechize Christians, not unbelievers.
- ♦ The meaning of parables is intentionally not obvious.
- ♦ The mysteries of the Christian faith can be understood and believed only by Christians.
- ♦ Natural man cannot accept and believe in the mysteries of the Gospel because they are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).
- ♦ The gift of the Holy Spirit and faith is required in order to receive and believe in the mysteries that the parables teach (1 Corinthians 2:14-15).
- ♦ A single parable may teach many truths.
- ♦ Most often, God is the chief actor in the parables.
- ♦ Parables teach how God operates differently from how sinful man operates.
- ♦ Parables confront catechumens with what their sinful heart is by nature.
- ♦ Parables proclaim that faith and salvation is solely a gift of God's grace in Christ.
- ♦ Parables invite catechumens to explore more deeply the mysteries of God's grace and salvation to them in Christ.
- ♦ Parables always teach reliance upon Christ and never teach reliance upon self.

Catechesis Summary on the Parables of Jesus

The parable of the Sower and the Seed is used by Jesus to teach His disciples the purpose of parables. Parables are figurative stories in which Jesus reveals the mysteries of the Gospel and how God works so very differently from how man works. God is motivated by pure grace in His actions toward sinful man and not by any merit or worthiness in man. Sinful man is motivated in his actions toward others on the basis of what he perceives they deserve.

Parables often describe the way things are in the kingdom of God. In the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Jesus sows the seed of His Word in the world, but unlike the skilled sower of His day, Jesus sows His seed everywhere—the pathway, the stony ground, and among the thorns. The Gospel is preached indiscriminately to all people because the very message of the Gospel is forgiveness and salvation for all sinners without partiality. The number four represents the

whole earth in which the Gospel is preached. The seed of the Word of God alone produces faith. Faith is a miracle of the Word. Soil is the sinful heart in which the Word is planted. The devil (the birds that eat the grain on the wayside) is an enemy of the Gospel, along with the Christian's fleshly desire to avoid persecution (the stony places) and to place his confidence in the things of this world (the thorns). The devil, the world, and the sinful flesh fight against the Gospel and attack the faith of every Christian. "Good soil" is that heart which the Sower Himself has prepared to receive the Word of the Gospel. The heart has no power of its own. Like soil, the heart is spiritually lifeless and inert; it must be acted upon. Soil can only receive what is planted in it. The new life of faith is engendered by the Word alone.

The parables of Jesus explore many articles of Christian doctrine, such as the authority and efficacy of the Word of God, the grace of God, the atonement of Christ, prayer, and the Second Coming of Christ in judgment. The parables often warn of impenitence and divine judgment, calling Christians daily to repentance and faith.

See the *Parables of Jesus* for a brief discussion of each of Jesus' parables. The following list of teachings from the parables is not exhaustive, but is intended only to give examples of some of the basic teachings of each parable.

Parable of Jesus:

The House Built on the Rock (PAR-1)
 The Good Samaritan (PAR-2)
 The Friend at Midnight (PAR-3)

 The Rich Fool (PAR-4)
 The Barren Fig Tree (PAR-5)
 The Sower and the Seed (PAR-6)
 The Tares in the Wheat (PAR-7)
 The Mustard Seed (PAR-8)

 The Leaven (PAR-9)

 The Treasure Hidden in the Field (PAR-10)

 The Pearl of Great Price (PAR-11)

 The Dragnet (PAR-12)

 The Unmerciful Servant (PAR-13)
 The Great Supper (PAR-14)

 The Lost Sheep (PAR-15)

Basic Teaching:

The Word of Christ is the only foundation for faith.
 Jesus is like a foreigner who loves His enemies.
 God hears our prayers because He cares for us and has promised to hear us.
 Covetousness is idolatry and destroys faith in Christ.
 The Lord is patient, but judgment will eventually come.
 Faith in Christ is a miracle of God's Word.
 Unbelievers will exist with believers until the judgment.
 The small seed of the Gospel produces a mighty Church that gives salvation to sinners.
 The Gospel spreads throughout the world and produces faith.
 Jesus redeems the whole world by giving all He had to redeem us.
 The Christian's worth comes from the price Jesus paid to redeem us.
 Jesus' angels will gather all believers and unbelievers together for the day of judgment.
 The refusal to forgive is rejection of Christ.
 Helpless and needy sinners are the most likely to receive the Gospel.
 Christians who wander from the fold can be brought to repentance.