

A Video Supplement for *Come, Follow Me* Lesson 12: “Who Hath Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear”

Transcript

In Matthew 13, Jesus gives several notable parables, stories which focus on commonplace occurrences like growing crops but contain rich symbolic lessons a layer beneath. In this video I will discuss the parable of the sower. This parable begins at verse 3:

- 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;
4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:
5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.
7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

This is the end of the parable, which is relatively short, but what Jesus says next,

- 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

let's us know there is more here than meets the unaided eye. Watch out when Jesus and the apostles say “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” or similar phrases. This is a marker that you need to look beyond the plain meaning of the text to a deliberate symbolic layer. Understandably, this is often the case with the parables, which are explicitly symbolic teaching. This is also often a marker for teachings which we would associate with the temple. As with the Lord's house and as Jesus points out to his apostles, those with eyes to see and ears to hear will find the parable rewarding, while those who do not may come away with naught but an anodyne agricultural anecdote. This also isn't an accident as Jesus makes clear to his apostles:

- 10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

The term “mysteries” is another marker that lets us know that we are dealing with symbolic teaching. It too is often associated with references to the Lord's House when it occurs in the

scriptures. As we will see here, mystery does not mean that it cannot be understood or that we aren't meant to understand it, but rather that it will be understood by those who are spiritually prepared to receive further light from the Lord.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Jesus speaking in parables is not exactly a compliment to many in his audience, but rather reflects the fact that many of those in his audience are spiritually immature and have cast out light and knowledge to such a degree that if Jesus were to plainly share his teaching it would condemn them rather than blessing them. It also happens to describe their situation as we will see. Meanwhile others, such as the apostles, who have received and are choosing to continue to receive knowledge from the Lord are to be rewarded with understanding and, to help them along the way, Jesus provides them the explanation.

18 ¶ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Jesus here makes a really interesting point. It is first when someone does not understand the gospel that they reject it. The gospel is naturally appealing. For those who have seen what it can mean in a person's life and family when it fully takes root it is nigh unto unthinkable to live in a way that cuts out the associated blessings, but it is easy when one doesn't understand. It is when someone fails to understand the word, when they fail to conceive what is being taught, that it is taken away and consequently does not take root and cause them to become fruitful. In this regard, the Lord makes clear the duty we have to be prepared to help people to understand the gospel by seeking to understand it better ourselves. As Doctrine and Covenants 88:7 reads, "And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith;" so, according to the Lord, being well-read is important for helping others to understand the and embrace the Gospel.

Continuing with the Lord's explanation of the parable

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Plenty of people are willing to embrace truths that don't cost them anything in terms of allegiance, duty and unpopularity. Some make the mistake of thinking that following Jesus always falls into this category and, as he explains, leave when they find out they were wrong.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

It is as easy to perish drowning in good things as in bad. The comfortable numbness of temporal security is no substitute for founding your life upon the rock of Christ. Don't starve spiritually on a full stomach. Then-Elder Oaks gave an excellent talk on the necessity of foregoing at times those things that are merely good in pursuit of those things which are of greatest and eternal worth (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/10/good-better-best?lang=eng>).

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

This is why the sower planted the seed to begin with, right? so that it can bring forth fruit. The ultimate fruit which the Lord is interested in are His children, exalted as families, and the reason for giving us the gospel is so that we can keep the commandments that lead us along the covenant path toward that ultimate goal. However, even when one bears fruit, the word does not take root to equal degrees in all hearts and so not all bring forth equal fruits. Consequently, Saint Jerome points out that not all receive the same rewards (<https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.vi.vi.II.html>),

The fourth proposition of Jovinianus, that all who are saved will have equal reward, is refuted (19) by the various yields of thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold in the parable of the sower, by (20) the "stars differing in glory" of 1 Cor. xv. 41. It is strange (21) to find the advocate of self-indulgence now claiming equality to the saints. But (22) as there were differences in Ezekiel between cattle and cattle, so in St. Paul between those who built gold or stubble on the one foundation. The differences of gifts (23), of punishments (24), of guilt (25), as in Pilate and the Chief Priests, of the produce of the good seed (26), of the mansions promised in heaven (27-29), of the judgment upon sins both in the church and in Scripture (30-31), of those called at different times to the vineyard (32) are arguments for the diversity of rewards. The parable of the talents (33) holds out as rewards differences of station, and so does the church (34) in its different orders.

So Jerome here understands the varying yields to be indicative of something like the degrees of glory.