



The Glory of Christ's Parables

The parables of Christ are those parts of His teaching that use comparisons from our natural world, human behavior, or human relationships to reveal or conceal the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:13-15). These parables are well known and much loved, and certainly also radiate the glory of Christ. Let's consider a number of ways in which they do this.

Christ's parables show His glory, first of all, because of the light they shed on our natural world. Think of the rich and varied scenery He used in parables. There are agricultural scenes – a sower going out to sow (Matt. 13:3-8), or a fig tree being examined by the husbandman to see whether it is bearing fruit (Luke 13:6-9). There is a wedding scene, where bridesmaids are waiting to attend a bride (Matt. 25:1-13). As the Son of God, Christ Himself had created all these things, seen and unseen. But in His human nature, He studied this glory that His own eternal hands had made. In fact, in the parables Christ harnessed the glory of His own creation, and used it as the code to convey most splendidly the glory of His kingdom.

Christ's parables show His glory, second, because they show forth the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom can be defined as the gracious reign of God in the hearts of His people by faith in His Son, the King of the kingdom. What more glorious truth is there than God's reign through grace over undeserving sinners! This kingdom is invisible to the human eye, but it operates in hearts throughout the world, and is moving to a final culmination at the second coming of Christ. In the parables, Christ unveils this kingdom to the eye of faith, not all at once, but gradually, in ways in which believers can take courage from what God is doing by His grace in our world.

Third, Christ's parables show His glory because they unveil to believers aspects of His glorious person and work. He is the king of the kingdom, and He leaves His imprint on every parable like a watermark on expensive paper. He is the one digging around the fig tree (Luke 13:8). He is the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:44, 46). He is the shepherd who goes out to find the lost sheep (Luke 15:5). Who is the Father in the parable of the prodigal son, other than God in Christ seeking prodigals in order that He might receive them and show them His salvation (Luke 15:20)? What rich insights there are in the parables into the person and work of the Redeemer for those who believe!

Finally, Christ's parables show His glory because they search our hearts by the Spirit. The glory of Christ in the parables acts like an x-ray, unmasking and exposing the evil in our hearts. Think, for instance, of how the parable of the rich fool exposes our greediness and selfish spirit, thinking we have it all in order, with many goods stored up for many years (Luke 12:16-21). Think of how the parable of the good Samaritan indicts us for our coldness in the name of religion and our lack of mercy to those in need of mercy (Luke 10:30-37). Think of the parables that challenge us with respect to prayer or the forgiveness of others. The parable of the friend at midnight, which ends with these words:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

(Luke 11:9)

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, Christ warns us: *"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses"* (Matt. 19:35). How these parables shine brightly to warn, correct, and encourage us. This too is evidence of the glory of Christ's parables.

Applications

1. Are we teachable? In order to see the glory of Christ in the parables, we need to have our spiritual eyes opened. By the work of His Holy Spirit, the Lord needs to make us humble and teachable. Many think they understand the parables, and yet the glory of the parables does not penetrate their hearts. Without faith, we simply stay on the surface of the parables and fail to see the glory of the Savior for what it is. Like the disciples of Christ, we need to ask the Lord: *"Declare unto us the parable..."* (Matt. 13:36).
2. Are we transformed? When we truly see the glory of the Lord in His Word, the Bible tells us that we become transformed *"from glory to glory"* (2 Cor. 3:18). Then the kingdom of heaven, which the parables promoted, takes shape in our lives, and something of the glory of the parables will reflect to others as well.

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