

Series: Parables: Did You Hear That?
Message Title: **Introduction to "Parables: Did You Hear That?"**
Date: Sunday, August 5, 2018
Scripture: Matthew 7:21-28
Speaker: David H. McKinley
Location: Warren Baptist Church, Augusta, GA

Introduction

I don't know if you have ever visited New York City, but I remember the first time I was there. I felt like a "country bumpkin," though I had grown up in one of the larger cities in the south. The size and scale of the buildings in NYC were amazing. Of course for me, I'll always remember the unforgettable image of the twin towers looming over the city skyline—never imagining that I could or would see them come down.

The other impression was the pace of life, activity and speech; it was a bit overwhelming. Times Square was and is the hub and heart of the city.

I am reminded of story about a small town farmer and his friend who were walking in Times Square when the streets were busy, noisy, and filled with people. The sounds of the city were almost deafening. Suddenly,

the farmer said, "I hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all this noise!"

"No, I'm sure of it! I heard a cricket."

"That's just crazy," said the friend.

The farmer listened carefully for a moment, and then walked over to a cement planter where shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. In utter amazement, the friend said, "That's incredible! You must have superhuman ears."

"No," said the farmer. "My ears are no different from yours. It just depends on what you're listening for."

The friend replied, "There is just no way. I could never hear a cricket in this noise." But the farmer simply replied, "It depends on what is really important to you."

About that time someone dropped a jar full of money, and glass and coins scattered everywhere. You know what happened?

People stopped and turned. The farmer said, "See what I mean? It all just depends on what's important to you."

Just like a farmer is in tune with nature and notices even the smallest details, Christians must be in tune with God and focused on the spiritual things of this life.

For this reason, Jesus came into the world and would often use stories—simple stories—to show insights, principles and truths easily overlooked in the skyline of religious activity that surrounded Jerusalem and all of Israel at that time.

Today I want us to begin a new series of study together. *Did You Hear That?* is a study that will take us back to the gospels and allow us opportunity to see and hear the stories of Jesus, called *parables*. At the same time, these stories will come up beside us and challenge us to examine ourselves and our faith.

"Each parable is a simple word picture with a profound spiritual lesson."

While it is true that Jesus told simple stories, it doesn't mean that what He said was comfortable or easy. To the contrary, His teaching carried weight, exposed error and demanded change in a way so many failed to understand in their religious swamplands.

In particular, Jesus used parables to demonstrate and delineate the difference between authenticity and hypocrisy in faith.

What is a parable? The most common definition is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

The word, *parable*, means "to place beside" or "cast alongside."

"A parable is a 'side by side' truth!"

Jesus taught by providing a compliment or contrast through story-telling to bring clarity and expose error.

How do you know whether something is real? ...fake? Diamonds (breath test), purses (stitching), watches, shoes, more!

“Jesus’ parables had a clear twofold purpose: They hid the truth from self-righteous or self-satisfied people who fancied themselves too sophisticated to learn from Him, while the same parable revealed truth to eager souls with childlike faith—those hungering and thirsting after righteousness.” —John MacArthur

Interestingly enough, we find a wide-range of parables (48 references) in the first three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, but not one is found in the gospel of John. Over the next few weeks, we are going to trace the entire storyline of parables in Luke.

Yet today, to set the tone and background of this entire series of studies, I want you to join me in Matthew 7:21-28:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and do many mighty works in Your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never

knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching” (Matthew 7:21-28 ESV).

Here’s the issue and its impact:

What is a true profession of faith? It is not just words spoken—words are shallow like sand, but it is faith lived. It has character, substance and stability—like a rock! The possession and practice of that faith is the real evidence of a true profession of faith in Christ.

James = “Faith without works is dead.”

Matthew 5–7 = Sermon on the Mount

On a hillside in Galilee, people came from all around to see and hear Jesus. See Matthew 5:1. Having provided discussion and instruction on many life issues, we still struggle today.

Jesus wraps up His message with the point of the whole thing—hypocrites who profess faith (but have no works) and disciples who practice faith (and build life upon Christ). Last week, we discussed Christ as the foundation of a life that remains and endures. See 1 Corinthians 3:11.

This is why Jesus made it clear: “Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:24 ESV).

He who hears and does them—“Did You Hear That?”

In our noisy, active and distracted world, Christ is calling people who have much more than faith-chats; He is calling them to a living faith.

We will find that Jesus repeats this over and again: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 8:8. Don’t miss the point—your life and your future depend on it!)

Many people are hearing, but not listening. Many are talking, but many are not walking the faith.

Hearing involves perception, penetration and action—like the farmer and the cricket in New York City. God wants people who profess to know Him to show that they hear and respond to His voice by becoming evidence to the faith they profess in the pathways in which they live.

I love the way Warren Wiersbe describes the quality of parables when He said they are “mirrors” and “windows.” They help us to look at ourselves and see beyond the walls of our church to impact a world in desperate need of the God who made us to know and love Him.

So let’s get to the truth and tragedy seen here:



1. A Life Built on Spiritual Pretense (SAND)

This leads to judgment (depart from Me). God is not in this! They say, "Lord, Lord." This is the right profession ("say" = confession), but did "we not do" = works. This is the mistaken belief that we can save ourselves, deliver ourselves, redeem ourselves. Word and works, not faith!

Built on sand—looked sufficient. It was a ready-made level surface, but when the seasonal floods came, suddenly it was shifting (not solid). It was revealed—foolish, deceived!

Some of the things you did may have looked good on the surface, but underneath the motives were shifty truth—"workers of lawlessness."

For this reason, He said, "I never knew you! You claimed Me, but I did not claim you." Not that He did not know this about them—God knows all, but there was no relationship.

In Scripture, the word, *to know* or *knew*, reflected intimate awareness. See Genesis

4:1. "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain..." It is the Hebrew word, *yada*. In 1997, this was popularized in a Seinfeld episode, "yada, yada, yada," but it was their way of glossing over details and incriminating information about sexual encounters.

The idea is knowledge that is intimate, personal and undeniable.

Do you know God? Does He know you?

"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Galatians 4:8-9 ESV).

The Christian faith is not rooted in what's above the ground (not a list of do's and don'ts), but what lies beneath. Notice both houses looked the same. They appeared substantial, stable, and they were in proximity of each other. They had the same conditions,

but only the final storm made it clear. One was a facade with no foundation and the other had a foundation that remained strong and sure.

You may get where you want to be in life and then life turns stormy—the tests and stress of winds and floods come. Does the foundation on which you stand hold?

“Great was the fall of it.” Dramatic emphasis—a warning—a collapsed life. Don’t let your life be like this! Jesus was calling people out of religion into a relationship with the Heavenly Father, and He wanted them to know what real and lasting faith looked like.

2. A Life Built on Gospel Truth (Wise)

How can we know God? How can we be known by God? Through a personal faith and trust in Christ and Christ alone. Spiritual life, power and assurance is in Christ. Jesus was a skilled craftsman and knew something about building—carpenter’s house!

The foundation of the Christian faith is the person and work of Christ.

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’” (Matthew 16:13-18 ESV).

Jesus is the ROCK, and this confession of faith in Jesus Christ results in a life of surrender to the lordship of Christ internally, and obedience to Christ externally.

See 1 Corinthians 3:11. The Apostle Paul made it clear this was the foundation of his preaching, life and ministry, and it was the only foundation. The gospel is the wisdom of God unto salvation. See 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24, 30; 2 Timothy 3:16.

Jesus didn't build His Kingdom on Peter and his apostolic leadership, but the kingdom of Christ reflects His sovereign rule in the lives of all who profess Him as Lord.

"This story/sermon ends with what has been implicit throughout—the demand for radical submission to the exclusive lordship of Jesus, who fulfills the Law and the Prophets and warns the disobedient that the alternative to total obedience, true righteousness, and life in the kingdom is rebellion, a life that is self-centered in eternal damnation." —NIV Commentary

What lies beneath a true and authentic spiritual life?

- **A Change in Attitudes, Not Just Activities**

See Matthew 5:1-11. This is the opposite of the scowl of the Pharisees and their self-focused righteousness. Jesus spoke of great brokenness and awareness of need for God's grace, mercy and strength. See again Matthew 6:1.

“Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up.”

True believers are hungry for the word of God.

“But He answered, ‘It is written,’ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’”
(Matthew 4:4 ESV).

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Peter 2:1-3 ESV).

It is the hunger to live a righteous life. See Matthew 5:19.

• **A Concern For the Glory of God**

We no longer live for “me,” but for Christ and for His glory. This is the reason for our existence.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16 ESV).

Good works don’t take us to heaven, but follow us there.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10 ESV).

“God is not an accessory for your good; you are an accessory to His glory.”

• **An Internal Desire to Obey God**

See Matthew 5:17. Jesus made it clear that the Law was NOT given to govern external behaviors, but the heart. The Law exposes thoughts and motives. The law causes us to see how desperate we are for grace, and this grace changes us from guilt-ridden religion to gratitude-based obedience.

God’s standard is a standard of perfection. See Matthew 5:20.

“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 ESV).

Perfection is impossible, and apart from grace, we have no hope of being righteous.

That is why Matthew 7:23 warns against profession that trusts self-righteous works rather than the all-righteous work of Christ for us.

See Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10-13; 3:21-25!

• **A Hope Beyond This Life**

See Matthew 6:9, 19, 33. Our way of life on earth is shaped by the hope of our eternal home (heaven) —“treasures in heaven,” “hopes in heaven.” We are in this world, but not of this world and only for this world.

“Hope for the believer is not a dream of what could be, but a confident expectation of a guaranteed result that shapes his life.” —Paul David Tripp

This was true of the builder who understood the need to build from the foundation up.

• **A Life Reflecting Christ-like Character and Contrast**

See Matthew 7:12-13, 20. This is in contrast to self-righteousness that is “sugar coated”—there is a character of pursuit of Christ.

Holiness is not separatistic, but initiates, engages and acts for the good of others at the price of personal sacrifice. See Matthew 7:12. “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.”

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35 ESV).

This character is forged in the hard places and spaces of life’s narrow gate—trees that bear fruit. By fruits you will know them. This is inside-out evidence. And this holiness is founded on the righteousness of Christ and not that of self.

This is the reason “our faith and hope are built on Christ.”

*My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*His oath, His covenant, His blood
support me in the 'whelming flood;
when all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found,
dressed in His righteousness alone,
faultless to stand before the throne.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
all other ground is sinking sand.*

—Edward Mote

It's not enough to listen, we must live the truth—everyone who “hears these words and does them.”

It's not enough to have exposure or awareness; we must have surrender and responsiveness. It is not enough to say we have faith; we must show we have faith.

The dividing line of this message is this: those who hear and those who heed!

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

I ask you one final time today: “Did You Hear That?”