

Parables: Jesus the Storyteller

Lesson 16 - Jesus' Code Language

Warm up –

1. Did you have any special codes for communicating with your friends when you were a kid?
2. Remember trying to grow seeds in little paper cups on the window ledge in kindergarten? How well did the plant turn out?
3. Jesus offers "abundant life" to everyone. How do you suppose he reacts when people reject it? How would you react if you gave someone you love a gift and he or she said, "No thanks'?"

Lesson -

Did you and your friends ever make up a secret language? You know, when "difulgunk" meant, "Meet me behind Miss Rauzer's classroom at break, and "bumbloat" meant, "You owe me your best snack." Or maybe you can remember sending in your Choco-Blast cereal box tops for a free secret decoder ring. The idea of communicating in a private language no one else can understand is mighty appealing.

Jesus didn't use any mumbo-jumbo secret language, though. He was a great storyteller. It wasn't for nothing that crowds followed him around. In fact, sometimes all those people hanging on every word got to be too much for him, and he'd ask his disciples to row him off in a boat. But it's true that few people in his audience seemed to fully understand the stories Jesus was telling.

Jesus often told stories called parables to teach people. They were about everyday situations and folks his audience could relate to - stories about farmers, fishermen, land owners, and Samaritans. You may have heard parables described as "earthly stories with a heavenly meaning," but that's not quite right. The stories Jesus told had an *earthly* meaning. They were meant to teach people about the kingdom of God, which is right here already in this world.

But sometimes Jesus directed his teaching only toward those who truly believed in him. Jesus knew that unless people had faith, his parables about the kingdom of God wouldn't make any sense. In his first parable - the Parable of the Sower - Jesus compares the good news about the kingdom of God to seeds that are scattered on different kinds of ground. He looks at how people respond to that good news.

For the next few sessions, we'll look at some of the parables Jesus told (there were twenty-seven altogether) and what they have to tell us about the kingdom of God.

Read Matthew 13: 1-13

1. As you read this, look for different kinds of "soil" in which the farmer sows the seed. Describe each type of ground as you come across it.
2. Who is responsible for planting the seed? Who is responsible for making the plants grow?
3. Who is Jesus' audience? Do they understand the parable? Do the disciples understand it?
4. Why are some people given the gift of insight into God's kingdom while others are not? What responsibility do we have toward those who do not have faith?
5. How well does the seed of the gospel flourish in your life? Are you more like the road? The gravel? The weeds? The good earth?
6. Share with the group what it means to you that the kingdom of God is here right now. What difference does it make in the way you choose to live each day?
7. Why do you suppose some people don't want to talk about Jesus? What can we do for these people?
8. What is the basic point of this parable?
9. Describe some evidence of the harvest that comes when the seed of the gospel grows in good soil in your own life and in your community.